

Violence and Conflict Resolution in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and *Iwein*,
Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois*, and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

This dissertation advances research by George Fenwick Jones, Richard Kaeuper, Warren Brown, and Gerd Althoff, analyzing violence and conflict resolution in four Arthurian romances that emerged from a culture that viewed (justified) violence as a legitimate means of attaining and maintaining honor. Using Kaeuper's analysis of the spiritual valorization of knighthood in *Holy Warriors: the Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (2009) and Jones's analysis of honor in *Honor in German Literature*, I show functions of spirituality and the pursuit of honor in literary conflicts, discussing how virtues such as *mâze* and *êre* served as catalysts for violence as an expectation of the unwritten code of knightly virtues.

Fictional violence falls into two major categories: chivalric and non-chivalric. Chivalric violence includes all forms of battle within the vocation of knighthood, such as jousting. Catalysts for chivalric violence include *âventiure*, *minnedienst*, vassal obligation, independent fighting, etc., and may involve both intended and unintended violence. Chivalric violence includes violence against, and perpetrated by, other knights, and violence against non-human creatures. Non-chivalric violence includes those categories of violence not within the knightly vocation, such as direct and indirect violence of knights against women, the violence of women toward others, violence against the self, and the wrath of God. Similar, but not identical, to the categories chivalric/non-chivalric are the categories justified/unjustified.

I consider these aspects of violence in four courtly works: 1) *Erec* (circa 1190) and 2) *Iwein* (circa 1203), by Hartmann von Aue, 3) *Wigalois* (circa 1210), by Wirnt von Grafenberg, and 4). *Parzival* (circa 1210), by Wolfram von Eschenbach, analyzing manifestations of violence according to the aforementioned categories, suggesting motivations with consideration to courtly virtue(s) that may have demanded violence, as in the defense of honor or the lack of virtue. This

dissertation confirms that the spiritual validity of knightly violence, the preferred form of conflict resolution, is assumed in Arthurian romance; alternative means of resolution invite accusations of cowardice. The concept of *êre*, so pivotal to the “code” of knightly virtues in the Middle Ages, was intimately and unequivocally linked to violence; this study even contends that it was predicated upon it.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Winder McConnell, Professor emeritus of the University of California, Davis and Co-Chair of this dissertation, for his tireless reading of my drafts, invaluable advice, and long, intriguing discussions about all things courtly and medieval. One of the most valuable things I have acquired in the writing of this project are the scores of pages of commentary that Dr. McConnell wrote in response to each chapter I submitted. This dissertation would never have been possible without his advice and assistance.

I would like to thank Dr. Bill Keel of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas and Co-Chair of this dissertation for his readiness to drop whatever he was doing to answer my questions about dictionaries, linguistics, MLA style formatting, and many other topics.

Many thanks to Dr. Leonie Marx of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas for her careful reading of all my drafts, and for offering advice and many questions about the material that I had not considered.

My thanks goes also to Dr. Caroline Jewers of the Department of French and Italian at the University of Kansas, who is a treasure trove of information concerning the courtly culture of Arthurian romance and the Crusades. I always left her office with a great deal more to think about than when I entered it, including a fresh list of books to check out from the library.

Many thanks also to Dr. Anne D. Hedeman of the Kress Foundation Department of Art History at the University of Kansas for agreeing to serve as the outside member on my committee, and for her willingness to meet with me to discuss this project. Her fresh perspective was of great assistance and led to the inclusion of the Excursus at the end of this work.

Lastly, I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Doctor Otfrid Ehrismann of the Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen, who suggested the focus of this project. I am honored by his interest and suggestions.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Introduction	1
1. Popular beliefs concerning the Middle Ages	1
2. Methodology	3
3. History of violence in the European Middle Ages.....	4
4. The development of feudalism.....	6
5. Development of knighthood from vassalage and <i>ministeriales</i>	14
6. Origins of knighthood as a noble class	15
7. Effects of Christianity on knighthood.....	20
8. Knighthood as a vocation of <i>gewalt</i>	23
Excursus on <i>gewalt</i>	27
1. Commentary on the Excursus	27
2. <i>gewalt</i> in <i>Erec</i>	28
3. <i>gewalt</i> in <i>Iwein</i>	30
5. <i>gewalt</i> in <i>Wigalois</i>	31
4. <i>gewalt</i> in <i>Parzival</i>	33
5. Conclusion	36
Hartmann von Aue's <i>Erec</i> : Violence or <i>Acedia</i>	38

1. Introduction.....	38
2. Vengeance and its justification	41
3. Knightly enthusiasm for the <i>bûhurt</i>	49
4. Violence against women	52
5. Violence against the self	68
6. <i>manheit</i> and <i>zagheit</i>	71
7. Chapter conclusion.....	79
Hartmann von Aue's <i>Iwein</i> : Violence exceeding the bounds of <i>mâze</i>	82
1. Introduction.....	82
2. Seeking honor	83
3 The violence of <i>minne</i>	85
4. Guilt and Innocence	88
5. When violence is unbecoming	98
6. Controlled violence	100
7. Violence against the self	107
8. Iwein's second promise to return.....	112
9. Otherworldly creatures.....	114
10. Violence against women	119
11. Violence by women	125
12. The battle between friends	128

13. The fountain motif	129
14. Chapter conclusion.....	133
Wirnt von Grafenberg's <i>Wigalois</i> : Violence of a Christian Knight	136
1. Introduction.....	136
3. Women and violence.....	138
4. Violence against the self	154
5. Otherworldly creatures.....	165
6. The wrath of God	173
7. Accidental violence.....	176
8. The last battle	176
9. Chapter conclusion.....	178
Wolfram von Eschenbach's <i>Parzival</i> :	180
Spiritual and secular modes of conflict resolution.....	180
1. Introduction.....	180
2. The violence of <i>minne</i>	182
3. Love service	183
4. Violence against women	193
5. Catalysts for violence.....	207
6. <i>Kampfeslust</i>	213
7. Fate/The hand of God	224

8. Sexual violence	227
9. Modes of conflict resolution	229
10. Accidental violence.....	232
11. Chapter conclusion.....	233
Conclusion	236
Bibliography	246
Primary Sources	246
Secondary Sources	248

Introduction

1. Popular beliefs concerning the Middle Ages

Beliefs concerning the Middle Ages in Europe have proved stronger in the past couple of centuries than the evidence that texts from the period could reveal. In the nineteenth century, the medieval period enjoyed a reputation as the last natural and innocent state of mankind, a model to be emulated if one could only reject knowledge in favor of instinct. Friedrich von Hardenberg, otherwise known as Novalis, was one such admirer of the Middle Ages in Europe. He viewed it as a utopian period unified under its first love-affair with Christianity (164), to whose “glücklichen Frommen” ‘happy, pious individuals’ (163). God revealed His goodness and omnipotence with signs and wonders. He claimed that Martin Luther destroyed this happy unity and the free workings of the Holy Spirit through his foolish insistence on making the Bible available to all (167-68), instilling with his interference a “höchst fremde irdische Wissenschaft” ‘highly alien earthly knowledge’ (167) into Christian religion. In reality, the Germans had such a reputation for ferocity in the thirteenth century that the Franciscan monk Jordan von Giano prayed every day that he would never have to go there (Jordan of Giano 34).

Historians have at times emphasized the virtues of chivalry so assiduously that one is prone to overlook the darker aspects of the warrior class. Fictional texts of the Middle Ages encourage this practice, extolling prowess and bravery, and attributing superlative virtue, and even the sanction of God, to the knightly warrior who can best all his opponents. The intense focus on a hypothetical code of virtues has led to much argument concerning its nature. Since Gustav Ehrismann published his article “Die Grundlagen des ritterlichen Tugendsystems” (1919), the idea of an unwritten code of medieval courtly virtues whose predecessor was Marcus

Tullius Cicero's *De officiis* (44 B.C.)¹ has been variously attacked and defended. Ernst Robert Curtius called Ehrismann's article: "a close texture of error interwoven with error . . ." (535). In the article "Der Streit über 'das ritterliche Tugendsystem,'" (1951), Eduard Neumann called scholarship with an uncritical eye toward Curtius's claims "allzu leichtgläubig" (200). The emphasis is on the ideals of chivalry: "For most chivalric texts press some ideal about chivalry to the forefront, with bright gold leaf liberally applied to the expression. Almost unnoticed, our assumption can easily become that this is what chivalry was and how it actually worked in medieval society" (Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence* 34). Scholarly thought concerning the culture and practices of the Middle Ages is easily clouded by the virtues that medieval texts – historical and fictional – claim that their authors and subjects possess. Thomasin von Zerklære, whose *Der Welsche Gast* is a didactic primer of etiquette and ethics for young noblemen and noblewomen in the thirteenth century, states that such upright knights as Gawein, Erec, and Iwein provide worthy role models to those who wish to live a virtuous life (1041-46). Thomasin defends the courtly romances against the claim that they are all lies. He believes that they provide worthy lessons:

sint die âventiur niht wâr,
 si bezeichent doch vil gar
 waz ein ieglich man tuon sol

¹ According to Ehrismann, Cicero's moral philosophy goes back to Plato's and Aristotle's ethics, which were the basis for all further moral philosophy (3). That this moral philosophy was transmitted to the Middle Ages has to do with the renaissance of interest in the works of Cicero in the eleventh century (4).

der nâch vrûmkeit wil leben wol. (1131-34)²

In this passage, Thomasin does not seem bothered by the bloody descriptions of the battle that were an integral part of the knight's life. The behavior represented in the Arthurian romances, with its emphases on mercy and moderation in all things, was a vast improvement on the violence and suffering of reality. Knights of Arthurian romance fought to bring justice to the innocent and victimized. As such, they were medieval heroes. When reading the narrators' praise of knightly virtues, however, one must not forget that whatever task or mission a knight took upon himself invariably ensured that, at some point, he would become involved in violent conflict.

2. Methodology

The present study seeks to fill a gap in our cultural knowledge of the Middle Ages in Europe by considering violence and other approaches to conflict resolution through a close reading of four Middle High German courtly romances: Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* (circa 1190) and *Iwein* (circa 1203), and Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois* (circa 1210), and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (circa 1210). Each chapter categorizes under section headings the types of violence that are common to the work under discussion, and, where applicable, discusses attempts at alternative forms of conflict resolution. Some categories of violence occur in each chapter, but additional sections are included for those narratives that contain "unique" aspects of violence that differ substantially from the other works in question. The chapter on *Parzival*, for example, includes a section pertaining to the themes of sexual violence that occur in that work, a topic that is not emphasized in the other three romances examined. This study is not intended as

² 'Even if the adventures are not true, they model much that is good, which every man should do who aspires to be virtuous.'

a contrastive analysis of the four works in question, but considers manifestations of violence in each work separately.

3. History of violence in the European Middle Ages

The courtly romances in this study reflect prevalent attitudes toward violence during the Middle Ages. Charlemagne (742-814) wrote capitularies to curb violence, strictly forbidding such things as violence by the clergy and homicide for revenge (Brown 75). It is not known how successful Charlemagne's reforms were at establishing the peace (84). The prevailing culture, which maintained that individuals had a right to violent revenge, proved hard to alter. Althoff suggests that Charlemagne's attempts at a modern system of government were too innovative for the period (7). Although subsequent rulers showed a willingness to seek conflict resolution through peaceable means, the Arthurian romances were born in a culture that still insisted on vengeance as a personal right.

There is a long-standing conviction that the Middle Ages were a period of rampant violence, whose people readily and enthusiastically resorted to bloodshed as their first and best means of resolving disputes (Althoff 1, 10; Given 33-34). John Robinson refers to the "unbridled brutality of the feudal age" (xiii) and, indeed, the religious wars of the Crusades, to which he refers, certainly warrant such a description. The violence found in fictional texts from the period, such as the mid-twelfth century *Chanson de Roland*, confirms the stereotype that the Middle Ages were a bloodthirsty era. In that work, the hero, Roland, cleaves his enemy through the helmet, slicing his head, cutting down through his shirt and body, through the saddle on which he sits, and finally, deep through the backbone of his horse, killing both man and beast (CXIX.1-10). Brown calculates by means of statistical analysis, however, that the medieval world around 1200—the time during which the four narratives in this study were written—may

not have been any more violent as far as the number of homicides perpetrated than the modern European Union or the United States (3-5).

Where did the idea of courtly knighthood come from? If we look at Hartmann's first work, *Erec*,³ it appears as if the vocation and ideals of knighthood spring fully formed from the pen of the scribe. This is far from the case, however; most scholars of medieval Arthurian romance believe that Hartmann, in a very loose sense of the term, "translated" *Erec* from Chrétien de Troye's *Erec et Enide* (completed circa 1165-70), to which he added almost 3,200 lines (Gibbs 135).⁴ It was formerly accepted as common knowledge among medieval historians that the medieval German concept of knighthood with its unwritten code of chivalry stemmed entirely from France. Scholars believe that the medieval love poetry of troubadours and trouvères traveled from southern France to Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Gibbs 225). However, the courtly culture in which medieval epics thrived also exhibited native German features (101-02). According to Bumke, the adjective *ritterlich*, as a description of fine clothing or courtly behavior in women, is in evidence by 1170 in texts not taken from French models. Bumke is hesitant to draw strong conclusions from this, as his use of the subjunctive shows: "Das könnte darauf hindeuten, daß das Wort *ritter* nicht erst durch den Einfluß von

³ With this work, and with his subsequent work, *Iwein*, Hartmann introduced the Arthurian romances to German audiences.

⁴ That Hartmann based *Erec* on Chrétien de Troyes's version is not absolutely certain. Certain discrepancies, that are by no means insignificant, correspond to other analogues of the work, including the Welsh *Gereint fab Erbin* from the *Mabinogi* romances and the *Erexsaga* in Old Norse (Wapnewski 42, Gibbs 135).

chevalier zu einem Adelsprädikat geworden ist” (67).⁵ Like Gibbs, Bumke states that these ideological ideas were not merely taken over from France, but related to social norms already in existence in Germany from about 1150 onward when the historical *Kaiserchronik* and the narrative *König Rother* were written (78-79).⁶ During the Cluniac reform movement of the tenth century, the Benedictine abbey of Cluny advocated that the noble warrior take up arms for the work of Christ (Duby, *The Three Orders* 55, 139-40; Bumke 68). In order to delve further into the question of cultural influences on courtly knighthood, we need to look at the rise of the social system of feudalism that precedes the development of knighthood.

4. The development of feudalism

During the early Middle Ages, territorial lords owned most of the fertile land in central Europe. Great expanses of land were as yet uncultivated. Wresting the ground from the insidiously tenacious vegetation meant arduous labor with inefficient, usually wooden, tools that were an ineffective means of turning the soil enough to allow more than a meager crop (Duby, *The Early Growth* 197). According to Bloch, because of the inefficiency in plowing the land, its workers utilized a system of crop rotation, allowing crop-yielding ground of the previous season to lie fallow for a year before sowing seed in it again (61). This meant that one-third to one-half of the arable land lay fallow every year (61). In *The Early Growth of the European Economy*, Georges Duby provides great detail about weather and soil conditions from the sixth century

⁵ ‘That could be a sign that the word *ritter* did not originally become a title for the nobility through the influence [of the French word] *chevalier*.’

⁶ According to *The Oxford Companion to German Literature*, the *Kaiserchronik* was probably written between 1135 and 1150 (“*Kaiserchronik*”). According to the same source, *König Rother* was written about 1150 (“*König Rother*”).

through the High Middle Ages (3-11). He believes that these conditions explain in part the reason for the low population in Europe during the seventh century. In spite of this, the agricultural system was still insufficient to nourish everyone. The exchange of produce for money was a thing of the distant future. Thus, the peasantry had no means of providing for themselves other than from harvest or beast, but animal husbandry, too, taxed the resources of the land, so few could afford to feed their crops to cattle.

Peasants worked the lands, and, although they were technically free, the majority of them still lived on lands owned either by the aristocracy or the clergy, and owed rent and certain duties (Duby, *The Early Growth* 36). These duties included plowing, sowing, harvesting, and many other obligations determined by the laws of the region, and individual circumstance. Often the distinction 'free peasant' was little more than nominally different from slavery, because peasants were, in fact, attached to the land and owed obligations to the magnates. Duby records that the slaves and peasantry were essentially starving, whereas the landlords had granaries of stored grain (42). The peasants owed the magnates half of the time they put into working the fields (42). In exchange for their services, these peasants had a place to live.

Life in this sparsely populated region became even more tenuous in the eighth century. During this time, Europe began to endure raids from the Arab countries and from Scandinavia, and, since the ninth century, the Hungarians had come overland from the Asian Steppe to pillage central Europe (Bloch 8). Peasants grouped themselves together in villages, but this was not enough to protect them. Neither Vikings nor Magyars had any compunction about raiding monasteries and villages alike, and they were feared in these communities. A system was needed in order to protect the inhabitants.

Families in the Germanic region had previously protected themselves by a system of kinship ties. According to Green, the earliest detailed records extant of the kindred⁷ are recorded by Gaius Cornelius Tacitus in his *Germania*, written about 98 A. D. (*Language and History* 49). These ties included members far beyond the immediate family, such as generations of cousins and the extended families of spouses. The kinship groups served to aid and protect their members. At times, kinships were also detrimental when one kinship feuded with another. According to Bloch, kinship ties also meant that family members seeking revenge for murder were not overly particular about who received the brunt of their vengeance, as long as it was a member of the offending clan (126). The perpetrator's brother or cousin would do equally well as the perpetrator himself. Naturally, murdering a relative of the perpetrator only served to entrench the two kinship groups in a violent feud that could go on indefinitely, yet blood vengeance was encouraged. Some families, as Bloch relates, insisted on the grotesque practice of hanging up their murdered family member in the house, and not taking down the corpse until the murder was avenged: "[I]t hung withering in the house till the day when, the vengeance accomplished, the kinsman had at last the right to bury it" (126). Whether or not this system of kinship ties truly discouraged homicide among the Germanic peoples, Bloch states that the

⁷ The definition of 'kindred' in this study is taken from D. H. Green's *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*: "Already by Caesar's time Germanic society consisted of kindreds, constituting (instead of the family) the basic units of society and grouped together to form larger units or tribes. In a pre-state tribal state society kinship relations were the main source of protection for the individual, promising him legal and military assistance . . ." (49).

system was already deteriorating by the time of the Merovingian kings;⁸ during which neither kinship nor the state could prevent the onslaught of pillagers throughout the region (148).

Attacks from lands outside of western Europe from Northmen, Hungarians, and Moslems, combined with violence from within the region, meant that the Germanic peoples desperately needed a way to control violence. Both the various levels of the nobility and the lower classes needed a system by which they could defend themselves (Bloch 148). Weak individuals, and even whole villages, sought protection from those stronger than themselves, and willingly took oaths of dependence to secure it. This was known as “commendation” (150). In the case of vassalage, which was a specific form of commendation, in which a warrior of the higher classes commended himself (158-60), it included a ritual known as “homage” (161-62). Household warriors existed already during the time of the Merovingian dynasty (Bloch 151). The need to control violence is evinced by the difficulty of maintaining order even within feudal relationships; warrior vassals were known to war against their own lords (James Robinson 107). It was the tendency of such warriors to plunder the countryside that led McNeil to call them “only slightly more tolerable than the disease” (593).

According to Bloch, in one form of the vassalage ritual the man commending himself to the other’s protection knelt, and placed his hands within the hands of his new lord before repeating the ritualistic words of dependence (145-46). A kiss completed the ritual, and symbolized their alliance. As Bloch has pointed out, the submissive imagery of this ceremony is obvious. Bloch further relates that this form of the ritual is Germanic rather than Christian in

⁸ The Merovingian dynasty was founded circa 481 by Childeric (Thorpe 18).

origin, and that by the Carolingian period,⁹ it was imbued with the hallmarks of Christianity through the addition of a separate ritual, in which the commended man laid his hands on Christian relics or on the Bible, and swore fealty (146). Many men commended themselves to a stronger individual for protection. In fact, although such ties were not legal (149), they came to dominate the social structure of the period (161).

Commendation had existed since the period of the Franks, but it came with its own set of problems. One problem to be solved was how to remunerate deeds of service in an era when money was rare. Some lords took their “men” into their own household to feed and house them (Bloch 163). This served to strengthen the tie between lord and man, because the commended man took part in the daily household matters of his lord (68). Gradually, this form of remuneration became less favorable than a grant of land for the life of the commended man (174).¹⁰ Although allocating a fief made the feudal relationship more distant, it was greatly favorable to housing the man, because it meant that he had to raise his own sources of nourishment, which was no longer the responsibility of the lord (170).

⁹ The Salian Franks united Gaul under Clovis (d. 511), the fourth of the Merovingian kings (Thorpe 17). He defeated their enemies: the Romans, the Alemanni, the Burgundians, and the Visigoths. The last of the Merovingian kings were rulers in name only. The rulers *de facto* of the Frankish empire were the Mayors of the Palace (James Robinson 75). Charles Martel’s son, Pippin the Short, who was Mayor of the Palace to Childeric III, decided it was time to do away with the old dynasty, and received the sanction of the pope to become king of the Franks. Pippin was the first of the Carolingian rulers.

¹⁰ Over time, tracts of land became hereditary at the insistence of the families of commended men (Bloch 190).

Men from every social stratum commended themselves to more powerful lords in exchange for services. Knights, too, came from various social classes. William the Conqueror set up a system in England by which the vassals of each barony had to supply a certain number of knights or “military vassals” who were available for service at all times (Bloch 170). This reflected the feudal system of military obligation in Normandy from whence William had come (170). In the same passage, Bloch relates that lords considered it preferable to be able to buy these military services with moveable property alone in order to keep their lands together. This was especially true of ecclesiastical lords. Knights who fulfilled their duties in this manner, served as vassals, received their sustenance at their lord’s table, and dwelled in their lord’s household. Such standards, although economically more desirable, created clashes between churchmen and military vassals who lived in the same cloister. The only solution was to remove the warriors from the cloister by enfeoffing them (170). Knights, too, began to demand fiefs for their services rather than moveable property. When benefits shifted from movable property to fiefs, the transfer of the property from the lord to the vassal was symbolically completed by a ceremony known as “investiture,” in which the lord handed the vassal a stick or a clod of dirt, symbolizing the land (173). In the case of a vassal of higher social status, who might have vassals under him, the lord might hand him a lance. Although vassals originally worked their own land, such labor became distasteful to men who saw themselves as proud warriors, and the fiefs were henceforth worked by other hands (173). In this shift away from working the soil, we witness the more powerful vassals moving toward the status of the lower nobility. Bloch informs us that such fiefs, already provided with hands to work them when they were transferred to the vassal, were actually smaller manors (173).

The trend toward vassals as members of the lower nobility is reflected in the literature of the period. An example of a noble vassal who holds a fief of his lord appears in *Das Nibelungenlied* (circa 1210), a heroic epic that is more reflective of the Germanic warrior tradition than the Arthurian legends that are the subject of the current study (Hoffmann). In this epic, the margrave Rüdiger is a vassal to King Etzel, the literary and greatly idealized version of the historical Attila the Hun. As Etzel's vassal, Rüdiger is wealthy enough to be able to feed and house King Gunther and his cohorts. The following passage hints at the vassal relationship that Rüdiger has with Etzel:

“Mîne vil lieben herren, ir sult mir niht versagen.

jâ gæbe ich iu die spîse ze vierzêhen tagen,

mit allem dem gesinde, daz mit iu her ist komen:

mir hât der künec Etzel noch vil wênic iht genomen.” (1690)¹¹

As Etzel's vassal, Rüdiger had received lands and perhaps other gifts from him, and, since Etzel has not demanded any form of rightful payment as his lord, Rüdiger is well off. But receiving a fief from a lord was not the sole means by which land changed hands in the feudal era. Some free peasants lived on allods – land as yet unfettered by a feudal landowner (Bloch 171-72). Many peasants who owned allods chose to give them up in exchange for a lord's protection. These peasants then received their land back as a tenement for which they owed the landlord services (171). Many times these transactions took place not only for protection but also so that the tenant could acquire sustenance. The landlord benefited by increasing his land, and also, in some cases, by the acquisition of a new man to strengthen his military capabilities.

¹¹ ““My dear lords, do not deny me. I could give you and all the company who have come with you food for fourteen days. King Attila has asked no commission from me.””

A vassal was a warrior who commended himself to a more powerful man, and, in the later rituals, swore fealty to him (Bloch 173). Herein we see the dual role that commendation served, because the lord of the man also received protection from his vassals. Hence, commendation was a way of controlling violence. The more vassals a lord had, the more powerful he was against his enemies, for their deeds of service to their lord were military in nature. Thus, the lord could subdue those who would usurp his position of authority. Because a man swore to defend one's feudal lord, this could become problematic when the vassal's loyalties became divided, either because of swearing fealty to feuding lords or because a lord had a dispute with his vassal's kindred. This is what occurs in *The Nibelungenlied*, when Rüdiger swears friendship to the Burgundians and agrees to give his daughter in marriage to King Gunther's brother Giselher (1681.4b-1682.1). In the Germanic warrior tradition, this oath makes Rüdiger part of Gunther's kindred. Rüdiger owes service to King Etzel, however, so his loyalties are in conflict when he is called upon to fight against the Burgundians (2135-54). Rüdiger fears losing his honor as well as his soul; he is condemned no matter which loyalty he chooses to uphold. Rüdiger's plight, though fictional, evinces the serious nature of vassalage; the warrior who swore fealty was obligated to undertake violence, if necessary, to fight for his lord, no matter who the enemy was. These warriors were knights in the service of a lord.

William Henry Jackson discusses the distinction of the class of knights known as *ministeriales* with those who were free, i.e., those from the nobility, the *liberi* (52). He cites Benjamin Arnold when he states that all knights came to be treated as though they belonged to one social class, as early as 1139, regardless of their position in the hierarchy. Jackson points out the distinction between knights in France, all of whom were free, and those in Germany, whose *ministeriales* were bound to a lord. He makes clear, however, that in France there was still a

hierarchical distinction between common knights and those who were also lords (52). German *ministeriales* had more power than free knights in France, according to Jackson. The *ministeriales* often had knights of their own to command, and gradually came to be considered noblemen in the course of the twelfth century.

Although there was no uniform *ministerial* law, their status goes back to the eleventh century (Bumke 34). Their legal status varied throughout the land, but they could come from any stratum of the nobility. They acquired increasing power from about the middle of the twelfth century. From that time on, imperial administration and military leadership were in the hands of the *ministeriales*. From about 1200 on, their lifestyle had become almost equal to that of the nobility, and they became part of the lower nobility in all but legal status.

5. Development of knighthood from vassalage and *ministeriales*

The origins of knighthood reach back to Classical Latin (Bumke 64-66, Keen 27). The Latin verb *militare* meant ‘to serve in war,’ thus, the Latin word for a common foot soldier, *miles*, already contained the idea of service that the French term *chevalier* and the Middle High German terms *ritter* and *rîter* expressed. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, *miles* began to be used to refer to heavily armed, mounted horsemen. Bumke conjectures that this change in meaning may be traced to the development of armed cavalry during the reign of the Carolingians, and the simultaneous developments of vassalage and the feudal system (Bumke 65). *Chevalier* is derived from the Late Latin word *caballarius*, whose meaning changed from ‘a groom’ to ‘a man on horseback’ (66). Thus, by the time it appears in the French language around 1100, *chevalier* already contained the meaning of ‘on horseback’ that *miles* later developed. There was also a religious connotation of *chevalier* that developed in the twelfth century (66). It could describe both great lords and simple soldiers, so it went beyond the idea of

the *ministerial* in Germany. In Chrétien de Troyes's romances, *chevalier* became infused with the ideology of chivalry. According to Bumke, there is no evidence of either *ritter* or *rîter* in Old High German, leading one to assume that these words developed in the Middle Ages, and probably through the influence of both *miles* and *chevalier* (66). Like *miles* and *chevalier*, the principal meaning of *ritter/rîter* was military in nature, but each of these words developed the connotation of service that was derived from vassalage, and each began to be used in reference to the noble class (68). After it came to refer to a heavily armed horseman, *miles* connoted no class distinction; it could refer equally to any social class from the lower levels of the nobility of the aristocracy on up to the king (68-69).

Bumke claims that the word *ritter* did not reflect so much social history as ideology (68), but historical knighthood remained a violent profession. Taming the warrior/knight was a long process, and many would argue, with twentieth- and twenty-first century warfare as evidence, that humanity has yet to achieve even the ideology represented by knighthood in the Arthurian romances. The zeal with which knights undertook their "calling" in the Crusades, with the conviction that they were doing their Christian duty, evinces the turbulent dual nature of the human psyche; angelic and demonic tendencies co-exist within the same individual. It was the violent proclivities of humanity that necessitated knighthood in the first place; without our innate tendency toward violence, there would have been no need for a form of controlled violence.

6. Origins of knighthood as a noble class

From whence does the idea stem that knights are from the noble class? Bumke informs us that, during the Middle Ages, the Roman word *miles* (German: *ritter*), which formerly had described foot soldiers and included the idea of service, became a synonym for the nobility (68). Yet, the ritual that made an individual a knight did not begin as a designation of social class.

Neither did it hold a specific social class as a prerequisite: “Der Ausdruck ‘zum Ritter machen’ (*militem facere, faire chevalier, ze ritter machen*) wurde unabhängig vom sozialen Rang des Kandidaten gebraucht” (Bumke 69).¹²

According to Bloch, there was no true nobility during either the Germanic or the first feudal era, because no class of “nobles” had any legal status (283). Bloch defines nobility as a hereditary superiority with a legal status to which few new families are admitted. He further states that a true nobility did not begin to emerge in Western Europe until the twelfth century, and then only solidified as a class in the thirteenth. Nobility from the ninth through the eleventh centuries was very loosely defined in Western Europe. The idea that persons were described as “noble” whose ancestors had no history of slavery prevailed until the onset of the eleventh century (286). Thus, the independent owner of an allod could be considered “noble” simply because he had never submitted his land or his person to a lord. Even more surprising were the peasants who were called “noble” because they had retained their personal freedom, even though their land was subject to a lord (287). But not all those described as “freemen” were actually free of feudal obligations. Commendation was tied to the idea of service, and whoever put his land into the protection of a more powerful man had an obligation to that lord, whatever the original terms of the agreement had been. Thus, the association of every person described as “free” with nobility was doomed to die out, except with reference to military vassalage (87).

According to Bumke, the development of knighthood in both France and Germany took place in an atmosphere of profound social change (70). In France, knights were from neither the peasantry nor the nobility. They came to form an individual class between these two extremes as

¹² ‘The expression ‘to make someone a knight’ (*militem facere, faire chevalier, ze ritter machen*) was used independent of the social class of the candidate.’

the lower nobility as early as the eleventh century (70). This distinction was not so clearly defined in Germany, where the *ministeriales* were still differentiated from free noblemen. The gradual perception of knights as a lower class of the nobility came partly from the knights themselves. Despite the fact that they were commended men, they perceived themselves as grander than the class of men dependent on a lord for subsistence. Their demand for fiefs instead of moveable property, and fiefs already provided with men to work the soil, allowed them to live in relative ease in comparison with other commended men. This brought them closer to the status of the nobility.

There were developments, too, in the ceremony of investing someone with the weapons of knighthood. At first, the girding on of the sword to make a new knight, records of which date from the second half of the eleventh century, was always performed by someone who was already a knight (Bloch 312). This ceremony included striking the new knight a blow on the head or neck, an element that was, according to Bloch, related to other prolific primitive ceremonies (313). This was called “dubbing,” and was such an important element of the ceremony that the name “dubbing” gradually became associated with the whole ceremony. Originally, all free men were warriors, and could all participate in this ceremony where it was practiced, but with the development of feudal society, this initiation became limited to the military vassals and their chiefs. Knights increasingly recognized their status as opposed to the unwarlike multitude. Bloch states that, as early as the eleventh century, to say that the son of a great vassal was not a knight was tantamount to saying he was still a child (313). Laymen borrowed ecclesiastical terms to describe knighthood, such as the *ordo* of knights. Investiture was originally and normally performed only by another knight, but by the ninth century, it could be performed by a prelate (315). Blessing the sword, too, gradually became the province of a

prelate.¹³ Clerics attempted to turn investiture into a sacrament in an age when sacraments had not yet been clearly defined. Thus, a knight was not merely “made,” he was “ordained.” The term “to ordain,” in reference to knighthood, was in use before 1100 (314). Yet, knighthood’s connections to Christianity date even further back than that, because, as with the tools of any vocation during the Middle Ages, the knight to be dubbed laid his sword on an altar of the church in order to be blessed (314-15). Nonetheless, all of this pomp could be dispensed with whenever necessary, as knights were often dubbed on the battlefield (316).

Once the members of the military class began to disassociate themselves from their humbler neighbors, they began to close ranks. They barred anyone from the class of unfree men from entering the fold, and determined that only a man whose father or grandfather had been a knight could be knighted himself. Thus, during the period from c. 1130 to c. 1250, knighthood became hereditary (Bloch 321). This can be observed from the law books of the Order of the Temple, which was created about 1119 to protect Christian settlements in the Holy Land. There were two levels of fighting man in this order: the knight, who wore a white mantle, and the serjeant, who wore a brown mantle. The knights belonged to the higher class of the two. These two classes were based on social origin from the beginning, and lists of rules were written that described who was allowed to be a knight. Bloch states that the first *Rule*, written in 1130, does not lay any particular stress on the difference between wearing brown or white mantles, but the second *Rule* does, condemning any knight to be placed in irons who would attempt to deceive by donning a brown cloak (320). Bloch records how far knights had come in their assessment of themselves as noble warriors:

¹³ Bloch states that “most authentic feudal institutions” (315) were to be found in the North, in France.

. . . Ramon Lull did not think he offended Christian sentiment by saying that it was conformable to good order that the knight should ‘draw his well-being’ from the things that were provided for him ‘by the weariness and toil’ of his men.’

This epitomizes the attitude of a dominant class: an attitude eminently favorable to the development of a nobility in the strictest sense of the term. (319)

John Gardner made the idea that life imitates fiction controversial, and hence popular, in his book *On Moral Fiction* (1978). This seemingly retrograde notion of fiction molding reality, which has since become a topic of literary criticism in university classrooms, needs no greater example than that of the courtly romances and knighthood. It is tempting to imagine a world of surpassing chivalry that monastic authors had only to witness to send them tripping over their robes in their hurry to candle-lit scriptoria to put ink to parchment, but this was far from the case. The authors who created courtly romances were not describing the world they saw around them, but rather a world they desired. So far was the fantasy removed from reality that authors set their narratives in the past, highlighting the glories of a fictitious bygone era in order to contrast them with the reality of a regrettable present. Late medieval castles are evidence of this. We envision a great many knights in possession of their own castles and estates. Gahmuret had probably been in possession of three by the time he set out on his last adventure; one from the Moor Lady Belakane (*Parzival* 16.19-55.8), one inherited when his brother died (98.15-99.20), and a third when he married Lady Herzeloyde (95.27-97.12). Ulrich von Zazikhofen describes several castles in *Lanzelet*, composed circa 1194. According to Bumke, however, most of the castles that the lower nobility and the *ministeriales* built did not exist until the thirteenth century, subsequent to poets’ depictions of them in epic narratives (138), nor were Gahmuret and Lanzelet part of the lower nobility. Thirteenth-century castles may well be the attempt of the

lower nobility to insinuate themselves further into the upper class by evoking the images of a purely literary past, and thereby associating themselves with all the grandeur and nobility of Arthur's Knights of the Round Table. A similar phenomenon began in the thirteenth century with regard to knightly games; "Round Table Tournaments" were held in imitation of tournaments in courtly literature (Bumke 362-63).

7. Effects of Christianity on knighthood

The people of the Middle Ages accounted for the disparity of social status in various ways, the most popular of them based on the book of Genesis. They commonly explained the social classes in one of three ways: either it was attributable to original sin committed by Adam and Eve, to Cain killing his brother Abel, or to Noah cursing his son Ham to serving his two brothers (Bumke 36). From these explanations it is easy to see that the popular belief in medieval society was that all individuals had originally been equal, since each of these explanations originates in sin. Also apparent, however, is their inability to envision a world without this inequality; they believed the social classes had existed since at least the time of the Great Flood, and as such, they were tantamount to being instituted by God, especially because this inequality was instituted either passively or actively by one of the antediluvian patriarchs of the human race. Whichever explanation they favored, the nature of their explanations indicates that they attributed the inequality of the social classes to one of the great sins recorded in the Bible. In the medieval era, individuals viewed all laws as stemming from God, and thus, the social classes had to be explained in religious terms as well (Bumke 34).¹⁴

¹⁴ Related to the idea of social status was the enduring belief, set forth by Adalbero circa 1030, of the three 'orders' of society: soldier, priest, and farmer (Duby, *The Three Orders* 4-5). Adalbero believed that this interconnected order was instituted by God.

Knighthood conflicted with the tenets of Christianity in a number of ways. Christianity forbade that prisoners taken in battle should be reduced to the level of slaves and sold (Bloch 297). Courtly love, as it was expressed in the love poetry of the Middle Ages, was also problematic, since it was considered incompatible with marriage (Bloch 310). Another area that conflicted with Christianity was the idea of the vendetta. The spread of Christianity throughout the Germanic tribes introduced, with its hierarchical structure and exaltation of the king, a new form of society that superseded the kindred of the Germanic tribes (McNeill 489).

Christianity did not, however, wipe out the traditions common to these Germanic warriors, at least, not completely. In the Peace of God movement in France in the late tenth century, bishops, clerics, monks, and lay people sought to rein in the decidedly pre-chivalric behavior of knights, who pillaged the countryside, stealing livestock from both peasants and churchmen, among other violent acts (Bloch 414; Brown 101, 116-17).¹⁵ The Peace Movements were primarily meant to protect the clergy, but they created other limits as well. In the Truce of God Movement in the early eleventh century, proponents forced all who bore arms to swear an oath that they would abstain from acts of violence on holy days and from Friday to Monday¹⁶ (Keen 27). This movement was not very successful; knights expressed great enthusiasm for the glories of battle (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 43). They wanted to fight. Urban II purposely clothed his call to the Crusades in the language of the vendetta, familiar to warriors from both familial and feudal ties (Riley-Smith 15-16). He also promised freedom for all Crusaders from the

¹⁵ Duby notes that proponents of the Peace of God paradoxically threatened those who disobeyed with violence (*The Three Orders* 134-139).

¹⁶ According to Bumke, the period fixed was usually Thursday to Monday (400). According to Brown, it was Saturday afternoon until Monday morning (120).

temporal punishment of sins, which was propagandized into absolution (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 69). For clerics, the Crusades were almost a panacea, at least in theory; warriors could follow their inclinations by continuing to battle, and they could earn their salvation without any obligation to join the liturgical ranks; meanwhile, Christendom could reclaim some of the territory it had lost in the East (2, 15, 37). Those who responded to Urban's call turned their vengeance on the enemies of Christendom, and Christianity became a reason for warriors to engage in violence.

Although they certainly cannot be viewed as the sole instigators of change, the Crusades greatly influenced the development of Germanic warriors into chivalrous knights. Crusaders believed that the hard physical demands of the Crusades could replace any penance that a priest could prescribe (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 47). From a medieval Christian perspective, suffering was meritorious, because Christ suffered for the sins of mankind on the cross, and thus, to suffer was to imitate Christ (40). The idea that the suffering endured on the Crusades was meritorious started the process of the spiritual validation of knighthood. The process was confirmed by the claim that knights were God's servants in the service of justice. John of Salisbury, who served as secretary to Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury from 1147 to 55, wrote that soldiers served the will of God by meting out justice with the sword (*Policraticus* xvi.116-17). Knights began to believe that their labor as a whole was blessed by God, because they were exercising their proper role in the *ordo* of knighthood with the prowess that God had given them (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 95). The trend within knighthood was to accept any form of just knightly battle as an act of penance, including tournaments (157), in which knights practiced their skills for the sheer thrill of it in spite of clerical insistence that tournaments were "a festering source of all seven deadly sins" (67). The belief in the penitential nature of knightly battle is evident in Wolfram

von Eschenbach's *chanson de geste*, *Willehalm*, in which the battleground is a site of penance for the knight. The narrator's prayer at the beginning of *Willehalm* states that the hero turned to his weapons when he displeased God in order to atone for his sins (2.29-3.4). This thinking was not embraced by all knights, and was clearly part of a progression of ideas, but once clerics introduced the idea of spiritually valorized war against infidels, the circle of acceptable battleground could be stretched further to embrace other occasions of warfare. One way to extend the spiritual merit of fighting beyond the limits of crusading was to demonize the enemy. In the mid-eleventh century, Pope Leo IX (d. 1054) did this with Norman warriors in Italy, saying that they "had shown an ugliness worse than that of the pagans" (104). In the early twelfth century, clerics blessed an attack on excommunicated Christians in France (104). Clearly, knights were not the only ones "at fault" for extending the territory of acceptable battleground.

8. Knighthood as a vocation of *gewalt*

The concept of *êre* 'honor' is integral to the understanding of violence and conflict resolution in knighthood, and, for this reason, the medieval understanding of honor deserves a brief explanation. Medieval honor, a possession of the nobility, is more external than internal in nature. It does not commonly refer to inward moral justification. The medieval concept of honor could be better defined as the respect of which an observer deems a given individual to be worthy. Jones defines it as "an objective value, a good of fortune without ethical overtones" (4). *Êre* can also refer to praise or esteem that is given verbal expression by an individual to someone else. Because of the social nature of honor, a victory in battle had to be witnessed for the victor to receive honor from it, and a knight could not be honorable without undertaking violent acts. Hence, honor was intimately and unequivocally linked to violence.

Historically, the vocation of knighthood, a vocation in the systematic pursuit of violence, became sanctified, at least in the minds of a number of those who practiced it. Spiritual valorization through battle is not, however, a common motif in the four Arthurian romances in this study, though it is problematized in *Parzival*. In *Iwein*, Kalogrenant defines knighthood in broad terms to a man who has never heard of it (529–37). He describes a circumstance of violence – that of jousting with another knight. He does not use the Middle High German term *gewalt* ‘violence’¹⁷ in defining knighthood, but he does make one thing perfectly clear: knights sought violence.

The types of violence that occur in the four Arthurian legends in this study fall into two major categories: chivalric and non-chivalric. Chivalric violence includes all forms of battle within the vocational province of knighthood, such as jousting against individuals and in tournaments, and warfare. There are a number of catalysts for chivalric violence. Because knights continually pursue the type of honor that can only be won by defeating an opponent, they often set out to find *âventiure* ‘adventure,’ any circumstance that brings them into direct, violent conflict with another knight or other opponent. An insult or injury to one’s self, a friend, or relative is a catalyst that demands vengeance in order to maintain honor. *Minnedienst* ‘love service’ is another catalyst for violence, to which the pursuit of honor is directly related; in order to attain the hand of a lady, or even merely to serve (and impress) an unattainable lady, which is referred to as *hôhe minne* ‘lofty (unrequited) love,’ knights again seek violent conflicts with other knights, which, in turn, brings them honor if they are victorious. Vassal obligation, too,

¹⁷ Because of the many definitions of the word *gewalt* in Middle High German and the many ways in which it is used in the works under analysis, it is examined in an Excursus after this introduction.

called for a knight to defend his lord and otherwise serve him in circumstances that required battle.

Chivalric violence includes both intended and unintended violence. Since knights were heavily armed warriors whose faces were obscured by a visor, they were unrecognizable without their insignia. This leads to many occasions in the Arthurian legends when friends or relatives accidentally engage one another in battle. Chivalric violence includes violence against, and perpetrated by, other knights, as well as against non-human creatures, such as dragons, dwarfs, giants, and other creatures. Chivalric violence, in the context of this study, refers to violence that a knight is either obligated to perform or performs for the sake of attaining honor. It does not refer to the chivalric code that forbade behavior in one instance that it condoned in another, i.e., forbidding the unnecessary killing of another knight, but slaughtering an otherworldly creature.

Non-chivalric violence includes all those categories of violence that do not fall within the vocation of knighthood, such as the violence of knights against women, both direct and indirect; the violence of women toward others, the violence of otherworldly creatures toward others, and violence against the self. Related to the categories of chivalric/non-chivalric are the categories justified/unjustified. There are occasions when an act of chivalric violence – that is, an act that falls within the vocational province of knighthood – proves to be unjustified, as when friends or relatives unwittingly engage in battle. Likewise, non-chivalric violence is not necessarily unjustified; the wrath of God is one category of non-chivalric violence that is always viewed as justified.

In each of the following chapters, manifestations of violence are shown to occur either as a form of conflict resolution, or merely in the pursuit of honor. The Crusade mentality of the knight as God's emissary of justice is evident in the Arthurian romances analyzed, because the

knight's violent vocation is blessed by God. In two of the romances, *Erec*, and especially *Wigalois*, God's blessing on the eponymous hero and his acts of violence is assumed. Iwein is the only hero of these works whose excessive pursuit of violence causes him and others grief. It is not the acts of violence themselves that are the problem however, but Iwein's lack of moderation that causes him to break his promise to his wife to return within a year (2929-34, 3052-58). When Iwein finally expresses doubt as to whether he should engage in a particular battle, and turns to God for help, his life takes a turn for the better (4870-92). *Parzival* is a special case with respect to spiritual validation because the hero rejects God (332.1-14). Though Parzival is still successful in battle, his search for the Grail is futile until he reconciles himself to God (465.11-467.10). Medieval attitudes toward violence were not always negative. There are times in the Arthurian romances when a peaceful resolution to a conflict would be preferred, but these occasions prove to be an exception; violence for the Arthurian knight is an honorable pursuit.

Violence as an acceptable form of conflict resolution is easier to comprehend when we remember that modern attitudes toward violence are not that far removed from their medieval roots. While we avoid engaging in violence, modern television series such as *Vikings* and *Game of Thrones* show that violence can be, for those who indulge in it, at least an acceptable, perhaps even enticing, form of entertainment. The current study of Middle High German Arthurian romance is intended to augment the modern cultural understanding of medieval Europe and the attitudes toward violence and conflict resolution prevalent during that period.

Excursus on *gewalt*

1. Commentary on the Excursus

Throughout this study of violence and conflict resolution, the Middle High German word *gewalt* ‘violence, power, authority, protection, etc.’ appears numerous times in the Arthurian romances. At times, these iterations have been relevant to the topic of this dissertation. At other times, the meaning evident from the context goes beyond the scope of conflict resolution. Although the term itself has formed an important and intriguing aspect of this study, the analysis of the word *gewalt*, as it is used in the individual Arthurian romances, does not fit well within the foregoing chapters, yet the topic is too complex to be relegated to a few short paragraphs in the ‘Introduction’ or ‘Conclusion.’ Indeed, the sheer variety of meanings and the complexity of its usage means that an analysis of the term *gewalt* warrants its own section.

According to the *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jakob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, while the form of the word *gewalt* has changed little from Middle High German to New High (modern) German, its meaning has changed over time. Linguistic artifacts from Old High German suggest that the prefix of *giwalt* came from a verbal form, which helps to explain the higher prevalence of the form *waltan/waldan* in other Germanic languages. In *Beowulf*, written sometime between the eighth and tenth centuries, its cognates appear with the meanings: “kraft haben, macht haben, über etwas verfügen, etwas beherrschen” ‘to have power, to command something, to rule over something’ (Grimm). In New High German, *Gewalt* is often used to refer to ‘violence,’ but it can also convey the idea of ‘power, authority, dominion, sway. . . .’ (Cassell’s). Lexer defines the Middle High German noun much like its modern equivalent: “stmf. gewalt, macht; herrschaft, deren gebiet; vollmacht; menge, überfluss an,” ‘violence, power; rulership, a ruler’s territory; authority; abundance, plenteousness’.

The various meanings of *gewalt* can be seen in their adjectival or adverbial derivatives *gewaltec/gewalïc/geweltic*, etc. Matthias Lexer defines the Middle High German adjective as: “*gewaltig, mächtig*” ‘powerful/violent, mighty’¹⁸ and the substantive form of the adjective as “*der gew[aldige], der bevollmächtigte, stellvertreter, prokurator*” ‘the violent [person], appointed agent, replacement/representative, procurator.’ Because *gewaldeg* does not have the variety of meanings associated with *gewalt*, the following textual analysis will be limited to the term *gewalt*.

2. *gewalt* in *Erec*

The term *gewalt* is used both positively and negatively in *Erec* and with multiple definitions. Iders, whom Erec defeats and sends to the Queen early in the narrative, refers to the Queen’s *gewalt* when he asks her to have mercy on him (1214-17). In this sense, the term is morally neutral; it refers to the Queen’s power over Iders for good or ill, since Erec has sent him to her as a defeated knight. Enite’s father, Koralus, uses a similar definition in reference to God, of whom he says:

“des gewaltes ist alsô vil,
er mac den rîchen swenne er wil
dem armen gelîchen
und den armen gerîchen.
sîn gewalt ist an mir worden schîn.” (540-44)¹⁹

¹⁸ Consider the following examples of *gewaldec* ‘powerful/mighty’ from *Parzival*: (108.5-6, 290.1, 332.1-4, 546.21-25, 753.12-15).

¹⁹ ““(God’s) power is so great that he can make the rich poor and the poor rich whenever He wills. His power is made manifest on me.””

This passage represents God as an ambivalent force, dealing with humans according to inexplicable whims; Koralus does not grumble over his state of poverty, but rather accepts it as God's will (535-39). He does not assess God's will as good or bad; his duty is to accept God's *gewalt* over him because whatever God does is right, regardless of human perception.

The narrator uses the term in a purely negative sense to refer to the *gewalt* 'force' with which Iders takes the beauty prize at Tulmein (*Erec* 200-17). Iders instills such fear in his competitors on this occasion that no one dares to challenge him when he takes the beauty prize "mit gewalte" 'forcibly' (215). Although Iders does not engage in physical violence at this juncture, his fierce demeanor is sufficient to intimidate his competitors into submitting to his will without a fight (216-17).

The term *gewalt* is often associated with the 'power' of a ruler, but, in *Erec*, it is used to refer to another aspect related to kingship. It refers to the territory that a monarch rules; in naming the important personages who come to Erec and Enite's wedding, the narrator mentions the Duke of Guelgezins, whose "gewalt" 'dominion' (1938) is called "Hôhe bois." The term *gewalt* is not used here in the same sense as its cognate *gewaltic* 'powerful and rich' in 1944 to describe the ten kings who come to the wedding. Sometimes, *gewalt* has seemingly contradictory meanings. It appears with the meaning of 'violence,' such as when, during a sword fight, Erec fends off Mabonagrins "mit gewalte" 'with violence' (9248), but it can also mean 'protection.' Mabonagrins find his future wife "in ir muoter gewalt" (9466).²⁰

Instances of violence in *Erec* are, of course, not limited to those occasions in which the term *gewalt* is used. Enite's father (and, by extension, Enite herself) is the victim of *gewalt* in

²⁰ 'under her mother's protection.'

that he was divested of his inheritance “von sînen übergenôzen” (405).²¹ This is clearly an instance of *gewalt* ‘violence’, even though the term does not appear in this passage. The narrator states that the old man’s poverty is the result of an “urliuge” ‘vendetta/fight’ (408) and that he was robbed by “die überkraft” ‘those who were overly powerful’ (409).

3. *gewalt* in *Iwein*

The definitions used for *gewalt* in *Iwein* are, as one would expect, similar to those that Hartmann used in *Erec*. The morally neutral definition found in *Erec* in reference to Ginover’s ‘power’ occurs again in *Iwein* in reference to Laudine when Iwein comes into her presence for the first time after killing her husband, King Ascalon (2294-99), and in reference to the lady of Narison who sends a salve to cure Iwein of insanity (3419-33). When Iwein delivers her from her persecutor, Aliers, the text speaks of him as being: “in der vrouwen *gewalt*” (3779).²² The lady can do either good or harm to Aliers; hence, the term *gewalt* cannot be equated with ‘violence’ in this context.

The term *gewalt* has several negative meanings in *Iwein*. Keie uses the term *gewalt* sarcastically to refer to the ‘injury’ the Queen would be doing Kalogrenant if she did not give the latter precedence over the other knights (123). A similar definition of *gewalt* occurs toward the end of the narrative when the elder daughter of the Count of the Black Thorn, who has acted without justice toward her younger sister (5635-38), asks King Arthur to deal with her leniently: “sô sult ir iuwer reht bewarn, / daz ir mir niht gewalte tuot” (7686-87).²³ In the sense in which Keie uses the term, it means ‘injury’; when the elder sister uses it, it means ‘injustice.’ Another

²¹ ‘by others more powerful than he.’

²² ‘in the power/authority of the lady.’

²³ “‘You should uphold your custom not to force ‘injustice’ upon me.’”

negative use of *gewalt* is in the sense of ‘threat’; Lunete speaks of three accusers who put her in prison as: “die drîe der gewalt ich dol” (4110).²⁴

The word also appears with the meaning ‘violence’ in *Iwein*. It is possible that Lunete means ‘violence’ when she says that the three did her: “michel unreht unde gewalt” ‘great injustice and violence’ (4137). It is unclear, however, whether this is direct, physical violence, or emotional violence. The text states that the elder sister of Black Thorn acts “mit gewalte” ‘with violence’ (5636) toward the younger in order to separate her from her part of the inheritance (5635-38). Curiously enough, it is during occurrences of actual violence that the term *gewalt* is not used in *Iwein*. The term is encountered most often when violence remains either theoretical or potential, as when Iwein contemplates winning back Laudine’s affection at the end of the romance through violence (7792-804). In this example, covered in section 14 of the chapter “*Iwein*: Violence exceeding the bounds of *mâze*,” Iwein has not engaged in the act of violence, but only plans it. When violence does occur, the narrator usually takes the opportunity to describe rather than name it.

5. *gewalt* in *Wigalois*

As with the other Arthurian romances in this study, *gewalt* has diverse meanings in *Wigalois*. The adverb *gewaltig* ‘powerfully, mightily, forcibly,’ perhaps even ‘violently,’ is used in reference to love: “vrou Minne vie den rîter sâ / und zôch in in ir hamât / gewalticliche âne strît, / daz er sich niht mohte erwern” (*Wigalois* 4139-42).²⁵ The word *erwern* ‘to resist’ contains the tacit suggestion that Wigalois might be inclined to resist if he were able. It also suggests that

²⁴ ““the three whose threats I endure.””

²⁵ ‘Lady Love caught the knight and pulled him powerfully into her territory, so that he could not resist.’

love is not a gentle, benevolent force. She overpowers the individual in her grasp: “Vrou Minne nam in mit ir kraft / und zôch in in ir meisterschaft / gewalticliche âne wer” (4153-55).²⁶ Even if all the more benign definitions of *gewalticliche* are employed in this context, we still get the impression that *Vrou Minne* is violent, because violence is a force that overpowers the victim. It can also refer to the omnipotent power of God, or to the benevolent power of a king’s rule, such as this reference to King Jorel: “die krône er gewalticliche truoc” ‘He wore the crown [i.e. ‘ruled’] with power’ (8602). References to *gewalt/gwalt* in association with God’s power tend to be ambivalent, much as we might understand Old Testament admonitions to ‘fear’ God:²⁷ “ditz was sînes gwaltes spil, / daz er disem küenen man / sînen trôst an gewan” (*Wigalois* 6476-8).²⁸ Though this passage ultimately refers to God’s intervention for good in *Wigalois*’s adventure, such references also carry a tacit warning that the power of God is not to be trifled with. A more negative definition of *gewalt* appears in passages referring to villainous behavior, as when the Red Knight, Count Hoyer, takes the Persian lady’s beauty prizes—the horse, parrot, and dwarf—by force (2515-81, 2756-57, 2766-70). The positive or negative connotation of *gewalt/gwalt* must be determined entirely from context.

There is a tendency in *Wigalois* to attribute the actions of evil to *gewalt*. *Wigalois*’s victories, by contrast, are attributed to more positive attributes or to God’s intervention.

Consider *Wigalois*’s description of his victory over Roaz: “nu komet und enpfâhet von mir /

²⁶ ‘Lady Love overcame him with her power and drew him forcibly (violently?) into her sway without resistance.’

²⁷ See for example Psalm 111.10, Psalm 128.1, Proverbs 8.13.

²⁸ ‘God was so powerful that it was easy for Him to remove the confidence from this brave man.’

iuer krône und iuer lant; / daz hât mîn sælde und mîn hant / erlediget und diu gotes kraft” (8768-71).²⁹ The narrators of medieval courtly romance could be biased in their judgment of various characters. Consider the contrasting choice of words concerning the defeat of Roaz, which the poet has again placed in the mouth of Wigalois: “sîn hôher muot der ist gelegen / und sîn gewalt den er begie” (8576-77).³⁰ Whereas Wigalois’s victory was achieved through *sælde* ‘luck, blessedness’ his *hant* ‘hand’ and *gotes kraft* ‘the power of God,’ Roaz’s rule was carried out with *hôher muot* ‘arrogance’ and *gewalt* ‘violence.’ This bias in Wigalois’s favor is not surprising, considering the unchivalrous manner in which Roaz slew King Jorel and his entire retinue. Wigalois, on the other hand, meets Roaz face to face, and both are armed and ready for combat according to the laws of chivalry. Although both knights use violence in their battle against each other, only Roaz’s actions are attributed to *gewalt*. This fact is significant with regard to Wirnt’s use of the term *gewalt*; if he chooses the term *gewalt* to refer to the villains Roaz and Count Hoyer, but not to Wigalois, to whom he attributes many more acts of violence in the narrative than to either of the aforementioned villains, what might the use of the same term say about Jorel’s rule or the power of God?

4. *gewalt* in *Parzival*

Even with the seemingly straightforward definition ‘violence,’ there are various nuances in the definition of *gewalt*. As we have seen with *Wigalois*, *gewalt* sometimes appears in the sense of ‘violence’ in passages referring to villainous behavior, but it also appears in references to individuals viewed as the instigators of conflict. Belekane’s enemies, who blame her for

²⁹ ““Now come and receive from me your crown and your land; they have been freed by my good fortune and my hand, and by the power of God.””

³⁰ ““His great arrogance is destroyed, as well as the violence that he carried out.””

Isenhart's death, attack her "zornlîche mit gewalt" 'angrily with violence' (26.5). This is the definition of *gewalt* used to describe the actions of the Babylonian enemies of the Baruc, whom Gachmuret defends (21.19-23). Condwiramurs uses this meaning of the word when she says that she will throw herself from one of the highest towers of her palace: "ê Clâmidê solde haben / mit gewalt mîn magetuom" (195.24-25).³¹ The violence referred to here may refer both to rape and to the destruction of her army of relatives, princes, and followers through battle and starvation (183.19-184.26, 194.21-25). Meljanz is the instigator of conflict with his vassal Lippaut, who states: "mîn hêrre mir gewalt wil tuon" (367.19).³² Gramoflanz, who has a personal vendetta against him, is the instigator of violence against Gawan (608.10-610.2; 677.1-12). Gramoflanz's position as the antagonist causes him to view others as potential threats; he claims that his army at Joflanze is so large that he need fear no "gewalt" 'violence' (684.25) from Orgeluse or King Arthur.

Acts of *gewalt* 'violence' can be either physical or emotional. Parzival protests against Sigune's scolding after his failure at the Grail castle: "niftel Sigûne, du tuost gewalt, / sît du mîn kumber manecvalt / erkennest, daz du vêhest mich" (441.15-17).³³ The word *gewalt* in this context adds weight to Parzival's protest; it shows how acutely Parzival feels Sigune's words. He uses the same meaning of *gewalt* to protest against Orgeluse's estimation of his character as someone who only ridicules ladies (697.12-29). When Gawan and Parzival engage each other in

³¹ "'before Clamide robs me of my maidenhood with violence.'"

³² "'My lord wants to engage in violence against me.'"

³³ "'Cousin Sigune, you do me violence when you reproach me, since you know how great my sorrow is.'"

battle, *gewalt* shows itself to be both physical and emotional: “hie hânt zwei herzen einvalt / mit hazze erzeiget ir gewalt” (689.27-28).³⁴ In this case, *gewalt* is used to express *hazze* ‘enmity.’

Direct and indirect forms of violence can be expressed by the term *gewalt*. Gawan uses the term *gewalt* in the sense of direct ‘violence’ when he believes Parzival is intentionally ignoring him: “hêrre, ir welt gewalt nu tuon, / sît ir mir grûezen widersagt” (300.24-25).³⁵ The phrase “gewalt . . . tuon” would literally be translated: “to do . . . violence.” Parzival refers to a hypothetical instance of indirect violence in reference to the lands that Feirefiz claims as Gachmuret’s son (745.28-746.10). If Anjou does indeed belong to Feirefiz, then Parzival has suffered *gewalt* ‘violence’ at the loss, but this violence is not the direct, physical violence of knightly combat.

The term *gewalt* can refer to one’s ‘power.’ When Clamide uses the word *gewalt* to refer to himself after Parzival defeats him, it has the more positive meaning of ‘power’: “mîn gewalt ist sîhter” ‘my power has lessened’ (213.14). The ‘violence’ of which Condwiramurs complains, becomes ‘power’ from the perspective of the enemy who attacks her. Clamide does not view his actions as negatively as Condwiramurs does. He refers to the ‘power’ of love when he describes his love for Condwiramurs (213.25). Parzival, too, comes under the *gewalt* ‘power’ of Lady Love (292.1, 293.5-8).³⁶ References to God’s *gewalt* ‘power’ usually refer to His omnipotence. The narrator prays a blessing on Belekane’s enemy Razalic, whom Gachmuret defeats in front of

³⁴ ““Two unsuspecting hearts have used their strength to display enmity (to one another).””

³⁵ ‘Sir, since you deny me your greeting, you obviously want to engage in battle.’

³⁶ Sometimes Lady Love offers help, as when Orgeluse captures Gawan’s senses “mit ir gewalt” ‘by force’ (655.21).

Patelamant (41.9-42.6, 43.6-8). This short prayer speaks of the omnipotent ‘power’ of God and the narrator’s hope that God will have mercy on Razalic if he should die without baptism.

Parzival accuses God of failing to use His *gewalt* ‘omnipotence’ to help him (461.22-26).

References to the *gewalt* ‘power’ of earthly individuals, to love, or to God, differ only in degree, i.e., whether the *gewalt* is limited or unlimited.

The sense ‘power’ can, by extension, also refer to ‘control’ or ‘authority’. When Parzival allows his horse to trot with loose reins, the text states: “mit gewalt den zoum daz ros / truog über ronem und durch daz mos: / wande ez wiste niemans hant” (224.19-21).³⁷ The first line of this excerpt would be directly translated as: “With power/control/authority over the reins . . . ,” but this translates into the manner in which the horse chooses his direction, thus: ‘haphazardly.’ A. T. Hatto translates this word as “impetuously” (120). The word can be rendered ‘power/authority’ when we read of Orilus’s attitude toward his wife, Jeschute (*Parzival* 264.19), and when Segramors tells Parzival to give himself over into his power/authority (287.29). An abstract concept can also have *gewalt* ‘power//authority.’ When Kingrimursel accuses Gawan of killing another knight in a friendly joust, he states: “unprîs sîn hete aldâ gewalt” ‘His infamy had all power/authority’ (321.8). Clinschor has *gewalt* ‘power/authority’ over all people both good and bad (658.26-27).

5. Conclusion

The above analysis of *gewalt* from four medieval Arthurian legends is not exhaustive, but it attests to the breadth of meaning that this Middle High German term can have. Though the definition is usually obvious from context, it can be difficult to translate this word accurately,

³⁷ ‘With loose reins, the horse carried [him] haphazardly over tree trunks and through bogs because he was led by no one’s hand.’

particularly in contexts that cannot be conveyed with a direct translation. As a result, one must walk a fine line between accuracy and sense; a technically “accurate” translation of a Middle High German line of poetry will not always convey the sense that the poet intended. Of course, this is true of any translation from one language to another, not only in Middle High German texts using the term *gewalt*.

Hartmann von Aue's *Erec*: Violence or *Acedia*

1. Introduction

Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* (circa 1190), which is probably based on Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide*, is the first Arthurian romance written in Middle High German. The prolog, which may have told something about the moral implications of the work, is regrettably missing. In Chrétien's version, the narrative begins at King Arthur's court with a hunt for the white stag (27-38). The beginning of Hartmann's work begins almost immediately with an act of violence against a maiden and against Erec. This instance illustrates a basic truth about violence as it existed in the medieval, unwritten code of chivalry: that an initial, unprovoked act of violence tends to generate further violence. It is the dwarf's initial act of violence that sets the narrative in motion (95-98). Erec will not desist from pursuit of his enemy until he has avenged himself (1036-38). As this and subsequent Arthurian romances show, these reverberating acts of violence could be justified or unjustified, committed by knights or other entities. A justified act of violence occurs, for example, when a knight seeks to defend or avenge a lady, as when Erec storms into a dining hall brandishing a sword and slaughters three men when he hears Enite scream (6587-624). Sometimes, however, the act of violence following an initial act is unjustifiable, as when the knight Orilus punishes his wife after he imagines that she has slept with another man (*Parzival* 132.28-136.8). Although a man in the Middle Ages could abuse his wife with relative impunity, Orilus's reactionary violence is misdirected in this instance, as evinced by the narrator's comment that: "si truoc ungedienten haz: / wîplîcher güete si nie vergaz" (257.27-28).³⁸ Orilus's violence would have been justified if he had directed it against Parzival – the man who committed the initial act of violence (129.18-132.25) – rather than

³⁸ 'She suffered hatred undeservedly, for she never forgot womanly virtue.'

against Jeshute. Orilus judges by appearances, however, and to him it looks as though Jeshute were a willing participant in another man's seduction (132.26-133.10). The difficulties that the characters in *Erec* encounter are physical and social; although Erec twice gives obeisance to God before engaging in battle, the narrative does not deal with the spiritual problems associated with knighthood and violence that are addressed in the introduction to this dissertation. Erec does not set out on a spiritually valorized crusade against infidels, nor is he concerned with the eternal implications of his chosen vocation. The hero of the first Middle High German Arthurian romance sets out initially on a personal quest for vengeance – a goal that can only be attained through some form of violence.

Medieval society admired mighty warriors and considered those who were victorious in battle as blessed by God. As Jones points out, kings who acquired the epithet “the Great” were not usually pacifists, but those who engaged in the violence of war and conquered their enemies (65). The great importance that the upper echelons of medieval society placed on personal prowess in fighting is evinced by the praise that Erec receives when he bests all the knights at the celebratory tournament after his wedding (2407–825). Erec evidently already enjoyed a reputation for wisdom, beauty, and liberality, because his performance at the tournament made his virtues complete in the eyes of onlookers:

Êrec der tugenthafte man
 wart ze vollem lobe gesaget.
 den prîs hete er dâ bejaget,
 und den sô volleclîchen
 daz man begunde gelîchen
 sîn wîsheit Salomône,

sîn schœne Absolône,
 an sterke Samsônes genôz.
 sîn milte dûhte si sô grôz,
 diu gemâzete in niemen ander
 wan dem milten Alexander. (2811–21)³⁹

This list of virtues is not based solely on Erec's ability to unhorse other knights at the end of his lance. The wording: "prîs . . . / den sô volleclichen" (2813-14)⁴⁰ implies that Erec had added the virtue of peerless fighting prowess to his other, already known, virtues. Erec's inimitable performance in the tournament completes his entitlement to honor. Fighting prowess may also imply a connection to wisdom stemming from the medieval belief that the outcome of every battle occurred according to the will of God (Jones 66). A man who won on the battlefield must, therefore, have God's approval. The opposite belief was also prevalent – medieval thinking dictated that a sinful man should lose, even though reality might have, and often did, tell them otherwise. But the human tendency to focus on events that confirm a long-held belief and dismiss those that do not is evident from Crusade history. After Jerusalem fell to Saladin in 1187 during the second Crusade, Pope Gregory VIII issued an encyclical that blamed the loss on the sinful lives of the Christians living there and on the sins of all Christendom (Riley-Smith 109).

³⁹ 'Erec, the virtuous man, was praised to the heights. He had earned praise there and that in such great measure that they began to compare his wisdom with that of Solomon, his beauty with Absalom, his strength with Samson. They thought his munificence was so great that they could compare it with none other than the magnanimous Alexander.'

⁴⁰ 'praise . . . / in such great measure.'

In other words, the crusaders' failure in the Holy Land was a result of the deserved wrath of God and not because the Muslims were better prepared for their attack the second time around.

2. Vengeance and its justification

When Erec's queen expresses a desire to know the identity of the knight and the lady they see in the distance, first her maiden, and then Erec, ride to ask his name. Both attempts result in unjustified violence; the knight's dwarf beats first the maiden and then Erec with a whip (31–58, 73–98). Neither the maiden nor Erec can be said to have provoked this attack. They will not obey the dwarf's order to be silent and go away (44-58, 83-98), but it is unknown whether the strange knight has ordered the dwarf to behave this way. The strange knight errs in allowing such behavior from his dwarf. After he allows the dwarf to whip the maiden, Erec believes the knight is not respectable (66-69). After the dwarf whips him, too, Erec's immediate reaction is to avenge himself, but, even in Chrétien de Troyes' version, he is armed only with his sword (Chrétien 38). According to Hartmann, Erec has no weapons at all, and the narrator informs the reader⁴¹ of how dangerous it would be to engage the knight in battle in that state:

ouch wolde er sich gerochen hân,
 wan daz er wîslîchen
 sînem zorne kunde entwîchen.
 der ritter hete im genomen den lîp,

⁴¹ Any and all references to “the reader” in this text refer also to listeners who may be hearing the text read aloud.

wan Êrec was blôz als ein wîp. (99–103)⁴²

In this passage, Erec wisely uses *temperantia*, Cicero's fourth cardinal virtue (Ehrismann 3), to restrain himself from reacting until such time as he is prepared to do battle.

As the first Arthurian legend in Middle High German, what does *not* pass through Erec's mind in this passage is as significant as what does. The narrator represents Erec as the superlative knight, possessing almost every virtue expected of his profession (2815–21). Considering the centuries-long debate over the spiritual merit of battle and prowess and the attempts of priests to dissuade knights from seeking vengeance, it is, therefore, noteworthy that none of this is mentioned in *Erec*. It is as if the warrior-knightly ideology had come full circle before *Erec* could be put down in writing. The kindred ideology that saw fit to mete out vengeance on any member of an offending kindred has been shaped and molded by priestly attempts to mitigate or limit violence and by their attempt to channel thoughts of vengeance toward non-Christians during the Crusades, but the original ideology of the Germanic kindred had not disappeared. At least in the literary world, the requirements of honor have defeated the dictates of the priestly representatives of God who attempted to force knights into accepting the Peace of God. None of the Arthurian legends take up the spiritual debate as to the legitimacy of shedding blood in battle as a Christian against Christians. These legends are written as though no such debate existed – as though the vocation of knighthood were indeed the highest, most honorable vocation under the heavens.

⁴² 'Erec wanted to avenge himself, but he was wisely able to subdue his anger. The knight would have taken his life, because Erec was wearing neither armor nor weapons.' Literally: 'Erec was as unarmed as a woman.'

The important concept in *Erec* is not orthodox Christian spirituality but the hero's *êre*, a complex Middle High German term that Lexer defines thusly: "act[iv]. ehrerbietung, verehrung; preis, zierde. – pass[iv]. verehrtheit, ansehen, ruhm; sieg, herrschaft, die gewalt des gebieters; ehre als tugend, ehrgefühl, ehrenhaftes benehmen" 'active: reverence, veneration; praise, adornment. passive: honorableness; reputation, fame; victory, dominance, the power of the ruler; honor as virtue, sense of honor, honorable behavior.' In this definition we see the necessity of victory over one's adversaries, of dominance. The shame Erec experiences in being whipped by a dwarf in front of his queen is unendurable to him because it places him in a position incompatible with: "victory, dominance, the power of the ruler." He is the one over whom the dwarf is victorious and dominating, who must do the dwarf's bidding and leave his question unanswered. It is doubly insulting because the victorious individual is a dwarf – "ein sus wênic man" 'such a little man' (119). For a noble warrior to be beaten in the face by such a little man is heaping insult upon injury (1039-45). Furthermore, Erec's reputation suffers because he endures this whipping in front of his queen. He goes on about his shame at length:

als im der geiselslac geschach,
mit grôzer schame er wider reit.
alsô klagete er sîn leit
(schamvar wart er under ougen):
"vrouwe, ich enmac des niht verlougen,
wan irz selbe habet gesehen,
mir ensî vor iu geschehen
eine schande alsô grôz
daz ir nie dahein mîn genôz

eines hâres mê gewan.
 daz mich ein sus wênic man
 sô lasterlîchen hât geslagen
 und ich im daz muoste vertragen,
 des schame ich mich sô sêre
 daz ich iuch nimmer mêre
 vûrbaz getar schouwen
 und dise juncvrouwen,
 und enweiz zwiu mir daz leben sol,
 ez ensî daz ich mich des erhol
 daz mir vor iu geschehen ist.” (109–28)⁴³

The words *scham* ‘shame’ and *schamvâr* ‘the color of shame, (i.e. “red,”)’ together with the similar word *schande* ‘disgrace’, occur four times in the above passage. The excerpt, and indeed, much of the narrative, revolves around this motif as Erec seeks adventure to regain honor after losing it, first at the end of the dwarf’s whip, and second in his tendency to *verlîgen* ‘neglecting knightly duties in order to sleep with his wife.’ All knightly virtues culminate in the one: honor.

⁴³ ‘After he was beaten with the whip, he rode back with great shame. Thus, he lamented his sorrow (His cheeks were red with shame): “Lady, I cannot deny it for you have seen it for yourself. Such great shame has never before befallen me in your presence. No one of my status has ever experienced the least amount more. That such a little man has beaten me so shamefully and I had to endure it from him, of that I am so deeply ashamed that I can never more in future show myself to you and these maidens, and I do not know what my life is worth to me unless I can make good again that which has happened to me in your presence.”’

To be remiss in any virtue is to lose honor. When the dwarf (and hence, the knight who owns the dwarf) dishonors Erec, Erec questions the value of his life now that he has been shamed (126). Erec has no choice but to seek vengeance against the knight who owns the dwarf.⁴⁴ Both in this instance and in the shame Erec experiences when his court loses faith in him after his marriage (2985-87), the pursuit of honor sets the narrative in motion.

Now that Hartmann has set up the theme of vengeance to re-establish honor, the influence of this predominantly Christian culture⁴⁵ on the warrior class becomes evident. Although Erec does not question his spiritual merit as a knight, the romance reinforces the culture of Christianity in which it was written, for Erec alludes to his hope that God will allow him to retrieve his honor from the dwarf.

“ist daz mich got sô gêret
 daz er mîn heil mêret,
 daz mir dar an gelinget
 sô doch mîn muot gedinget,
 sô kum ich über den dritten tac,
 ob ich vor siechtuome mac.” (138–43)⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Jones points out that a dwarf cannot give satisfaction; just as Hagen must avenge himself on Kriemhild’s nearest kinsman, Siegfried, for Kriemhild’s transgression in the *Nibelungenlied*, so, too, must Iders give satisfaction for his dwarf’s misconduct in *Erec* (Jones 90).

⁴⁵ See the Introduction to this dissertation, pp. 20-23.

⁴⁶ ““If God so honors me that he increases my good fortune such that I am successful as I fervently hope, I will return on the third day if I am still sound in body.””

If Erec succeeds in avenging himself, he can return to the queen and his former life, having regained his honor and with the confidence that God has dealt with him justly.

Erec is inconsistent throughout the narrative in his obeisance to God. He does not invoke God's aid in this scene, but he later commends himself to God before the tournament that follows his wedding, an act that wins the narrator's approval:

sîn êrste vart was ritterlich:
 zuo der kirchen er gie
 und ergap sich im dem noch nie
 voller genâden zeran:
 ez enwart ouch nie gar vrumer man,
 an im enstüende sîn rât:
 wan der in vor im hât
 an allen sînen dingen,
 der versehe sich gelingen.
 Êrec trûwete im vil sêre
 umbe sîn ritterlîche êre,
 daz er der geruochte phlegen. (2489-500)⁴⁷

The narrator calls going to church a knightly act, which evinces its importance in the narrator's view. In preparing for the battle against Iders, Erec speaks only of hope that God will allow

⁴⁷ 'His first act was knightly: he went to church and commended himself to Him whose grace was limitless. God's aid had never failed a truly virtuous man. Whoever relies on God in all circumstances can expect success. In regard to his knightly honor, Erec trusted Him completely to let it thrive.'

victory: “ist daz mich got sô gêret / daz er mîn heil mêret, / daz mir dar an gelinget” (138-40).⁴⁸

Whereas a twelfth-century crusader would undoubtedly have stopped to pray that God would deliver his enemies into his hands, Erec acts with the unstated assumption that God is already on his side. He does not even thank God for his triumph over this knight. The next time Erec commends himself to God is toward the end of the narrative, when he prepares to fight against Mabonagrîn (8632-44).

The ideology of knighthood has already justified Erec’s actions. Knights and clerics had haggled over the spiritual justification of holy war, the necessity of public confession, the merit of battle as an ascetic action, and the role of inner contrition until the clerics lost ground and knights became certain of their convictions—or at least certain enough for Hartmann to write as if they had. God still receives the credit, however, for making things come out right. When Iders explains to the queen that Erec is unharmed, Arthur and the queen praise God: “von disen mæren wurden dô / vil herzenlîche vrô / Artûs und diu kûnegîn / und lobetens unsern trehtîn” (1260–63).⁴⁹ Hartmann’s *Erec* sidesteps contemporary debate about the justification of knightly combat. There is no question of whether God justifies Erec, nor does the narrator feel compelled to claim that Erec’s enemies are “worse than Saracens” (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 107). When Erec sets out to defend his honor after he has been insulted by the unchivalrous knight Iders, he wins the battle because, as the wronged knight, he is supposed to win, according to the rules set up by authors of Arthurian romance. If he lost, rather than injuring the medieval conception of a

⁴⁸ ““if God so honors me that I am successful, upon which my heart hopes””

⁴⁹ ‘Arthur and the queen rejoiced heartily over this report, and praised God.’ The word *trehtîn* in Middle High German was used both as a term for a ‘war leader’ and as a reference to God (*Lexen*).

just God, it might imply that Erec had sinned in some way. Wirnt von Grafenberg puts these ideas into the words of a parrot: “daz nider got und rihtez hie, / wand er gestuont dem rehten ie” (*Wigalois* 2772–73).⁵⁰

The influence of chivalry is evident in this battle, but the joust also serves to show the vastly differing natures of the opponents. Erec’s refusal to attack Iders when the latter has been unhorsed is reflective of tenets of the code of chivalry that forbade a knight from attacking another who was at a disadvantage (*Erec* 822–32). Iders, by contrast, tells Erec in advance that he intends to slay him if Erec succumbs to him:

“ich sage iu vor wie iu geschiht.

ir enerbarmet mir niht:

als ich iu nû gesige an,

des ich nie zwîfel gewan,

alsô stât hin ziu mîn muot

daz ich danne dehein guot

næme vür iuwern lîp.” (714–20)⁵¹

After these boastful threats, it is Iders who begs Erec for mercy (951–63). Though Iders is clearly the more violent and merciless of the two competitors and unchivalrous in his threats, his request that Erec spare his life under the assumption that he has not caused him any *herzenleit* ‘heartfelt suffering’ deserving of death is also drawn from the code of chivalry. This unwritten

⁵⁰ ““May God conquer and judge here, for he has always stood by the just.””

⁵¹ ““I tell you in advance what will happen. I will have no mercy on you: if I am victorious over you, of which I have no doubt, I think that I shall accept no ransom for your life.””

rule appears in *Parzival* when Gurnemanz tells Parzival not to slay anyone who has caused him no *herzen kumber* ‘heartfelt suffering’ (171.27-30). Erec uses the chivalric code in this episode to show mercy to his opponent – both in refraining from attack while Iders is un-mounted and in sparing his life. Iders uses these unwritten rules to beg for his life. Erec underlines this contrast:

Êrec erbarmde sich dô.
 zuo dem ritter sprach er sô:
 “nû wil ich iuch leben lân:
 des enhetet ir mir niht getân.” (1010-13)⁵²

The warriors end the battle peaceably, though this resolution was only attainable through initial violence; Erec had to defeat Iders before this resolution became possible. Iders would have ended the battle with further violence: by slaying Erec.

Jones writes that the attainment and loss of honor were relative: “No one could enjoy honor unless someone else suffered disgrace” (20). This is precisely what we see in the two encounters between Erec and Iders (and Iders’s dwarf): Erec’s shame in the first scene shifts the balance of honor in favor of Iders. Erec’s defeat and shame mean that he must seek out the person responsible and defeat him in order to shift the balance to the opposite extreme, bringing about honor for Erec and disgrace for Iders. Similarly, Erec states that, if God allows him to defeat the knight at *Joie de la curt* ‘joy of the court’, he will gain much honor (8560-62). The defeat, and hence shame, of the one means the honor of the other.

3. Knightly enthusiasm for the *bûhurt*

⁵² ‘Erec had mercy on him. He said to the knight: “Now, I will let you live. You wouldn’t have done the same for me.”’

The tournament, which Geoffrey de Charney rates in his hierarchy of knightly combat as more worthy than the joust between two individuals (4.1-5), becomes a mode of celebration in *Erec*.⁵³ The narrator writes of a *bûhurt* ‘tournament’ that is organized upon the news that Erec has defeated Iders (1309–14). The narrative literature of the period reflects the eagerness of knights to engage in tournaments as, for example, when Gachmuret leaves Belakane because he does not have enough opportunity for knightly combat in Zazamanc (*Parzival* 54.17–55.12), or when this same knight makes permission to engage in regular tournaments a condition of his marriage to Herzeloyde (96.23–97.11). In spite of strong, negative, clerical opinion regarding tournaments, religious observance is connected in *Erec* to this form of battle (662-67). Kaeuper calls tourneying: “the quintessential knightly sport, cherished as one of the very elements inherent in chivalric self-definition” (*Holy Warriors* 66). The shedding of blood was by no means considered a regrettable part of a knight’s duties. Kaeuper explains that: “a delight in war becomes a corollary to the worship of prowess at the center of chivalric ideology” (*Chivalry and Violence* 161). When there were no actual battles on hand, knights occasionally – in fiction as well as reality – engaged in the ‘bûhurt’ – a tournament in which knights fought in a game without the intention of wounding their opponents. Tourneying had become by this time a form of entertainment, as is evident from this passage that recounts the tournaments at Erec and Enite’s wedding:

nû jâhen des genuoge,
ez wære âne vuoge

⁵³ Bumke explains that this understanding of a group of knights participating in a knightly joust for mere sport was more in keeping with the term ‘buhurt’ than ‘tournament’ (359). The word ‘tournament’ is used here, however, in order to reflect general usage.

ob ein also guot man
 solde scheiden von dan,
 dâ enwürde ein turnei genomen,
 sît si durch vreude wæren komen
 ze Britanje in ir lant. (2222–28)⁵⁴

At other times, when the pomp of the *bûhurt* was unavailable, knights went hunting. When Gawein marries in Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois*, his knightly pursuits are limited to riding out: "mit Hunden und mit vederspil" (1030).⁵⁵ Hunting was worthwhile entertainment. The knights entering Britain for Erec and Enite's wedding hunt as they travel:

vil garwe beroubet
 wart daz gevilde
 [an vogelen und an wilde:]
 swâ der hase erschrecket wart,
 daz was sîn jungeste vart. (2053–57)⁵⁶

Although Wirnt refers to hunting as *rîterscheffe* 'a knightly deed' (1029), hunting was only a worthwhile sport in the absence of the glorious tournament.

⁵⁴ 'It was said by a number of those gathered there that it would be unseemly for a good man (i.e., Erec) to depart from there without a tournament taking place, because they had come to Britain for the sake of pleasure.'

⁵⁵ 'with dogs and hunting falcons.'

⁵⁶ 'The land was completely denuded of birds and wild animals: wherever a rabbit was startled, that was his last run.'

4. Violence against women

Violence against women is accorded much less significance in *Erec* than it receives in Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois*, in which the narrator admonishes knights: "man sol reiner wîbe nôt / dankes nimmer überschen" (10459-60).⁵⁷ At the beginning of *Erec*, although the dwarf whips the maiden who asks about the knight's identity, this violently unchivalrous behavior seems to be, based on its cursory mention in the narrative, of secondary importance to Erec's loss of honor. Erec does mention it later, after he has defeated Iders, but he lists it together with the dwarf's other offence, that of whipping Erec in the face:

"iuwer getwerc sluoc ir maget
 gester umbe dise zît:
 ouch sluoc ez mich alsam sît
 daz ich disiu mâl gewan.

 daz ich bin sus zebrochen
 under mînen ougen

 und daz iuwer getwerc ie
 solh unzuht begie
 daz ez die maget hât geslagen,
 daz enwil ich niht vertragen." (1031-45)⁵⁸

⁵⁷ 'One should never overlook a pure woman's distress.'

⁵⁸ "'Your dwarf struck her (the queen's) maiden yesterday at this same hour. Afterwards he struck me as well, so that I received marks from it. . . . That I was thus whipped in the face . . .

When Erec states that he will not tolerate the dwarf's behavior, he lists both offences – not just the dwarf's violence against the queen's maiden. The reason Erec pursues Iders is not solely because the dwarf has whipped a maiden, but primarily because his honor has been compromised. When he leaves the queen, however, he refers only to his shame and not to the dwarf's violence toward the maiden (113-49). Likewise, in narrating the event to Koralus, Erec speaks only of the shame that he suffered:

“mir ist ein leit von im geschehen
 daz ich immer klagen sol,
 ez ensî daz ich michs erhol.
 sîn getwerce mich harte sêre sluoc,
 daz ich im durch nôt vertrauc:
 er was gewâfent und ich blôz,
 des ez dô benamen genôz.
 grôz laster muoste ich dô vertragen.
 daz sol mîn herze immer klagen,
 mir engevüege got noch den tac
 daz ich ez gerechen mac.” (481-91)⁵⁹

and that your dwarf engaged in such unchivalrous behavior as to strike the maiden – I will not tolerate that.”

⁵⁹ ““He has caused me a grievance that I must forever bewail unless I make it good again. His dwarf struck me severely and I had to endure it out of necessity, because he was armed and I was not, so that he escaped without harm. I suffered great dishonor. This will forever grieve my heart unless God grants me the day on which I can avenge myself.””

It is only after Erec has regained his honor by defeating Iders, the dwarf's owner, that he mentions the maiden again (1042–51). At this point, Erec threatens violence to avenge the maiden that he does not actually intend to commit. He talks of teaching the dwarf better manners toward women by chopping off one of the dwarf's hands (1052–55). There is a significant shift here from Erec's honor before he defeats Iders to the offence against the maiden afterward. The narrator informs us that, by threatening him, Erec *der guote* 'the good' only wants to warn the dwarf not to engage in such ill behavior again (1056–63). In fact, he has the dwarf stretched out on a table and beaten with rods, so that he bears the marks for twelve weeks (1064–1076). Would Erec have pursued the knight purely in defense of the maiden? The text does not provide us with conclusive information either to confirm or deny this. When Erec originally set out in pursuit of Iders, it was, according to his words, to defend his honor. It is noteworthy that, by the time Iders relates the events to the Queen, the story has been altered; the dwarf's treatment of the maiden ultimately gets the credit for motivating Erec to action (1241–52). There is no indication in the text, however, that one motivation to violence is more honorable than another.

As with each of the Arthurian legends in this dissertation, women suffer when their beloved knights go into combat. Enite cries when she believes Erec has been killed during the fight with Iders (850–54). When Erec and Enite approach Brandigan, the sight of the beautiful Enite with her brave husband squelches the revelry going on in the city; the young people who were dancing and making merry believe that Enite will lose her husband in battle with Mabonagrín, just as many others have done (8076–114). The text states: “manec wîp sich zen brüsten sluoc, / die andern sêre weinten” (8113–14).⁶⁰ Erec's attitude toward any ensuing suffering as a result of his death is relaxed: “sleht er mich, sô bin ich tôt: / daz ist der werlde ein

⁶⁰ ‘Many ladies beat their breasts, and others wept much.’

ringiu nô” (8046-47).⁶¹ Later, Erec expresses both his trust in God and the tranquility with which he views his own potential death:

“die wîle und mich got
 wil in sîner huote hân,
 sô enmac mir niht missegân:
 und enwil er mirs niht bîten,
 sô mac ich ze disen zîten
 alsô mære sterben,
 sô der lîp doch muoz verderben.” (8147-53)⁶²

The knight contemplating his own death suffers much less than the lady who survives him. The eighty women whose husbands have died at Brandigan and who cannot overcome their grief are proof of this: “wan in durch ir triuwe / der jâmer was als niuwe / als dô si sîn begunden” (8340-42).⁶³ Each has lost her husband to Mabonagrî and they turn pale and weep when they learn that Enite must suffer (as they believe) their own fate (8307-49). Erec is moved enough by their sorrow to utter a prayer for his protection, so that Enite does not become one of their

⁶¹ ““If he slays me, then I will be dead. That is a small loss to the world””

⁶² ““As long as I am in God’s protection, no evil can befall me, but if God does not grant that I remain, I can just as well die now, because life must end (someday) anyway.””

⁶³ ‘For, because of their loyalty, their grief was ever as fresh as when it first began. The inability to move beyond grief was a sign of the virtue *triuwe* ‘loyalty’ in Arthurian legends. Compare this instance to Sigune’s grief, of whom the narrator of *Parzival* writes that her loyalty brought her pain (250.11-17). Sigune herself states that she renews her grieving daily (252.26-26).

number, but their example does not dissuade him from fighting Mabonagrín (8350-55). He is willing to risk his life as well as Enite's future and happiness. Just how dangerous it could be for a woman to lose her husband becomes clear, however, when Enite, as well as those who stumble upon her, are falsely convinced that Erec is dead (6110-77).

The nobility in Arthurian legends do not always possess noble sensibilities or express the deference toward the fairer sex that courtly culture dictated. A number of villains, such as Lion in Wirnt's *Wigalois* (9812-37), provide, through their ill treatment of women, opportunities for knights to display the extent of their chivalry and prowess. In *Erec*, Oringles is just such a villain, because he insists that Enite marry him the very night after Erec's apparent death (6324-41). Even in the idealistic world of medieval courtly literature, women did not have much liberty in the Middle Ages; when Enite refuses, Oringles forces her into matrimony (6346-50). It is evident that even the narrator is unimpressed by Oringles's behavior, for he inserts the comment: "ich enruoeche, trüge in sîn wân" (6357).⁶⁴ As Enite sits grieving beside her husband, Oringles sends first two chaplains and three vassals to fetch her to dinner (6359-67). When she ignores them, Oringles sends yet more men to entreat her to come (6369-76). The text indicates that Enite's grief for her husband is so great that she is not even aware of them (6375-76). Finally, Oringles himself goes to her (6377-80). Though Oringles tries to persuade her to desist from grieving because her loss is not so great that he cannot more than adequately compensate for it as her husband, Enite declares that she would rather be buried with Erec than marry Oringles (6388-419). Finally, Oringles forces her to come to the meal with him:

sô enwolde si niht von der stat,

unz er si alsô betwanc:

⁶⁴ 'It means nothing to me that he is fooling himself.'

er zôch si hin sunder danc,
 wan si enmohte im niht gestrîten. (6425-28)⁶⁵

In the world of Arthurian legends, knights engaged in knightly combat to please ladies and, as Gibbs and Johnson point out, knights are subservient to them (130). Wolfram's tragic narrative *Titurel* thematizes this idea; never satisfied with her suitor's list of knightly achievements, Sigune inadvertently sends Schionatulander on one adventure too many, and spends the rest of her days as a hermitess, grieving his death (*Parzival* 435.6-30).⁶⁶ Though Wolfram's narrative allegorically criticizes the notion of dangerous knightly adventures as love service to ladies, the fact that he wrote such a narrative attests to the prevalence of the idea that knights used their prowess to please ladies. Oringles, therefore, already flies in the face of courtly etiquette by forcing Enite to come to dinner. He increases her suffering by insisting that she eat, so that Enite wrings her hands (6434-42). It is understandable, therefore, that the narrator strongly condemns Oringles's uncourtly behavior when he strikes Enite for refusing to cease lamenting and eat:

nû enmohte der grâve mê
 im selben meister gesîn,
 er entæte sîn untugent schîn:
 sîn zorn in verleite
 ze grôzer tôrheite
 [und ûf grôzen ungevuoc,]

⁶⁵ 'She did not want to move from there, but he forced her. He pulled her against her will because she was not able to resist him.'

⁶⁶ As *Titurel* remains a fragment, we only learn of the result of Sigune's rash demand from the earlier narrative, *Parzival*.

daz er si mit der hant sluoc
 alsô daz diu guote
 harte sêre bluote. (6515-23)⁶⁷

The narrator repeatedly expresses his opinion of Oringles' behavior through the words *untugent* 'ignobility, incompetency,' *verleite* 'misled, deceived,' and *grôzer tôrheite* 'great foolishness.' One line of the text is missing in this passage, but the editor has committed no great act of presumption toward the narrator's estimation of Oringles by adding the probable metrical rhyme "grôzen ungevuoc." The narrator adds the thoughts and voices of Oringles's guests to his own:

beide stille und überlût
 sô dûhtez si alle gelîche,
 arme unde rîche,
 ein michel ungevuoge.
 ouch wizzenz im genuoge
 under sîniu ougen:
 die andern redetenz tougen,
 ez wære tœrlîch getân
 und er möhtez gerne lâzen hân.
 er wart dar umbe gestrâfet vil:
 si wizen imz unz ûf daz zil
 daz der schalchafte man

⁶⁷ 'Now, the count could no longer master himself. He displayed his ignoble disposition.

His wrath misled him to great foolishness and to great impropriety; he hit her with his hand, so that the noble lady bled greatly.'

vil sêre zürnen began. (6525-37)⁶⁸

Both the narrator and the guests confirm the lady's rightful position in courtly society through their lengthy condemnation of Oringles's behavior. His treatment of Enite is unjustifiable violence against a lady, whose wishes he, as a man and a knight, should rather have been protecting. Oringles should have used his manly strength as a means of wooing Enite. Instead, he flouts the "codes" of chivalry by forcing her to marry him.

It would be a gross omission to condemn Oringles's behavior without recounting Erec's and Enite's roles in bringing it about. The reason the two of them set out on this adventure is because of Erec's tendency to *verligen* and, therefore, because of his resulting loss of honor. In other words, it is because he does not show *mâze* between his violent duties as a knight and his relationship with his wife. Enite knows that his reputation is suffering. Furthermore, the court blames her for his downfall in character: "si sprâchen alle: 'wê der stunt / daz uns mîn vrouwe ie wart kunt! / des verdirbet unser herre'" (2996-98).⁶⁹ Enite acknowledges that she is to blame for Erec's loss of honor at court (3007-08). She blames herself again later when she believes that Erec is dead: "des tôdes wære er hie erlân, / ob ich in drûf niht enhæte brâht" (5947-48).⁷⁰ Whether her beauty is to blame for seducing Erec, or whether the root of the problem lies in

⁶⁸ 'Both silently and out loud, they all thought the same, both poor and rich, (that it was a) great impropriety. The others told him to his face that he had done a foolish thing and that he should have left it undone. He was greatly punished; they rebuked him so much that the wicked man began to grow angry.'

⁶⁹ 'They all said: "Woe is the hour that our lady became known to us! This is ruining our lord.'"

⁷⁰ "'He would not have had to die if I hadn't brought him to it.'"

Erec's lack of *mâze*, is a debatable point. Whatever the cause for the social *faux pas*, Enite inadvertently alerts Erec to the fact that something is wrong when she sighs and complains, thinking he is asleep (3026-33). Subsequently, she becomes an inadvertent catalyst for action and violence when Erec insists that she tell him why she sighed (3034-49). It is immediately after Enite's explanation that Erec orders the horses to be saddled and they set out on an adventure that involves not only several violent battles, but also prompts Erec's violent attitude toward Enite (3050-69).

Enite has an ambivalent attitude toward, and relationship to, the violent nature of Erec's vocation. Her negative stance toward his vocation can be seen throughout the narrative in that Enite suffers through fear for Erec's life because of the violence that he undertakes in his capacity as a knight. She fears for his life when he battles Iders for the beauty prize (850-54), yet the contradictory nature of her relationship with violence is evident even in this first instance, because her beauty aids him in carrying out violent acts:

und als er dar zuo ane sach
die schoenen vrouwen Ênîten,
daz half im vaste strîten:
wan dâ von gewan er dô
sîner krefte rehte zwô. (935-39)⁷¹

Even though Enite fears for his life, she is pleased to be the lady of a brave warrior. The narrator expresses Enite's conflicted feelings concerning Erec's knighthood after the tournament celebrating their wedding:

⁷¹ 'And as he looked at the beautiful lady Enite, it helped him to fight: his strength doubled because of it.'

dô was ir sîn manheit
 beide liep unde leit.
 daz ir liebes dran geschach,
 daz was daz man im wol sprach.
 daz si leides dran gewan,
 daz was, si weste wol ir man
 in sô getânem muote,

 sô vorhte si in unlange hân. (2830-39)⁷²

Enite knows that Erec will repeatedly risk his life as a knight, yet those risks bring honor. She concludes that she would rather be married to a warrior than to a coward (2845-51). Enite's fear for Erec's life does not alter with this conviction, however; when Erec enters the garden to battle Mabonagrîn, Enite suffers such trepidation that she loses consciousness even before the two warriors face each other (8817-35).

How Erec directly treats Enite once they leave his court is also a form of violence; she suffers Erec's verbal abuse when he commands her to be silent on pain of death (3093-102). There are strongly differing opinions as to the reason for Erec's punishment of Enite after she repeats the court's unfavorable opinion of him. According to Bruno Quast, Erec interprets Enite's behavior as an act of betrayal: "[S]ie hätte den Tadel des Hofes rechtzeitig und

⁷² 'She both rejoiced and suffered pain because of his courage. She rejoiced because people spoke well of him. She suffered pain because she knew well that her husband had such a nature that . . . she feared she would not have him long.'

unaufgefordert weiterleiten müssen” (166).⁷³ According to Patrick M. McConeghy, however, the idea that women were to remain silent in courtly society was a commonality. The reputation that women had in the Middle Ages for gossip and frivolous prattle, whether true or false, affected rules of social propriety, so that it was deemed more appropriate for noblewomen to keep silent until spoken to (McConeghy 773-74). Enite disobeys this law of social courtesy, complaining of her sufferings when she believes Erec is asleep (3026-32). Whether Erec reacts to her speech merely because it is unbidden, or because she previously kept silent about his bad reputation at court, is unclear. It may be, as Borries suggests, that Erec’s goal is to test Enite to ascertain whether the quality of her inner virtue matches her outer beauty (78). Whatever the real cause of Erec’s punishment of Enite, Erec forbids her to speak. Enite suffers doubly under this stricture of silence; she suffers out of fear for her life as well as Erec’s because, after they set out with the horses, she wants to warn him of the robbers who lie in wait for them (3113-40).⁷⁴

The narrator comments on the profundity of her suffering in this instance:

waz möhte sich gelîchen
 sô nâhen gânder riuwe
 die sie von ir triuwe
 durch ir mannes liebe leit? (3141-44)⁷⁵

⁷³ ‘She should have conveyed the unfavorable opinion of the court in a timely manner and without having it demanded of her.’

⁷⁴ The narrator later explains that Erec could not see or hear as well as Enite because of his armor (4150-61).

⁷⁵ ‘What could compare to the deep pain she suffered because of her loyalty to her husband?’

Enite clearly believes that Erec is serious in his threats to kill her if she speaks, for she prays to God to help her make a decision in this situation in which speech means death for her and silence death for her husband (3145-66). Enite ultimately decides to speak because Erec's life is worth more than hers (3167-79). When Enite speaks, it is with great fear because she believes that she will, in all probability, be punished with death (3180-81). In spite of the fact that Enite prevents Erec's death by speaking, he is angry with her for disobeying him and takes it as confirmation of the reputation of women for taking pains to do whatever is forbidden them (3238-58).⁷⁶ Erec again threatens her, this time as though he were about to carry out her punishment (3253). If Erec's statement is to be believed, he only leaves Enite unpunished because she asks him to forgive her for the sake of his honor and promises that such disobedience will not occur again (3259-65). Yet Erec threatens to punish her, presumably with death, should the incident ever recur and punishes her by making her lead the captured horses (3266-75). True to her word not to speak again, Enite does not complain about this punishment. On the contrary, she does not resent it (3279). The narrator states that Enite suffers this and whatever unhappiness occurs to her heart as a woman should (3280-83). Enite keeps her promise for only the next three miles, however, and then the debate within her renews as five more robbers appear (3291-98). Even these robbers comment on the hard labor that Enite undertakes: "der ist bekumbert ir lîp / si vüeret driu ros an der hant" (3325-26).⁷⁷ It is easy, therefore, to understand why the Count

⁷⁶ This theme appears also in Gottfried's *Tristan*, in which the narrator writes at length in an excursus against the practice of keeping a woman under surveillance, since her nature is to do whatever is forbidden her (17844-985). It is senseless, he claims, because no man can control a wicked woman, and a good woman controls herself.

⁷⁷ "'She is hard driven. She is leading three horses by hand.'"

believes later that Erec treats her so badly that Enite would be grateful for deliverance from such a life (3752-96). Indeed, the narrator relates that leading the horses is a dangerous occupation for Enite:

wan daz vrou Sælde ir was bereit
 und daz diu gotes hövescheit
 ob mîner vrouwen swebete
 und dâ wider strebete
 daz ir dehein grôz ungemach
 von den rossen niene geschach,
 sô wære kumberlîch ir vart:
 des wart diu vrouwe wol bewart. (3460-67)⁷⁸

The extent of Enite's great relief in being relieved of the horses for the night attests to the difficulty of the work:

vrouwe Ênîte was vil vrô
 der ruowe der si dô bekam
 dô man ir diu ros benam.
 ir was als der sêle
 der von Michâêle
 wirt der hellewîze rât,
 diu lange dâ gebûwen hât. (3647-53)⁷⁹

⁷⁸ 'Unless Lady Fortuna had helped her and God's courtliness watched over her, protecting her from great harm from the horses, her journey would have been burdened with great care, but from this the lady was protected.'

Erec's punishment of Enite in making her lead the horses becomes a threat to his life and Enite's happiness when the Count, thinking that he can better her circumstances, is so enthralled with Enite that he threatens, out of Erec's hearing, to take her away from Erec by force (3828-37). Enite tricks the Count into waiting until the early morning to attack Erec, saying that this will allow him to take her without harm to himself (3908-36). Enite again suffers anxieties over how and whether she should tell Erec of the Count's plan to rob him of her (3959-92). She has even greater anxiety this time, because it will be the third time that she breaks his command of silence. She decides again that his life is more important than hers. Even when Erec escapes with his life from the Count and hurries away out of fear for Enite, he chastises her for speaking without permission and threatens to kill her if she does not desist (4116-32). In spite of his words, Erec displays a marked unwillingness to carry out this act even though she has disobeyed him a third time, for, rather than slaying her immediately as he has previously threatened, he warns her again that he will kill her on some future occasion of disobedience: "ich enwilz von iu niht lîden, / und enwelt ir ez niht mîden, / ez gât iu benamen an den lîp" (4130-32).⁸⁰ Immediately after promising not to harm him anymore, Enite breaks her promise, hearing the Count's men hurrying after them (4133-49).

Erec and the Count joust against each other in an act of justified knightly violence over Enite (4205-17). The joust is justified against the Count by the fact that the Count threatens to take Enite from him and from that fact that the Count insults Erec, calling him an "arger diep"

⁷⁹ 'Lady Enite was very glad of the rest when the horses were taken from her. She felt like a soul that Michael had delivered from the agonies of Hell where it had had to remain a long time.'

⁸⁰ "'I will not tolerate it from you, and if you do not desist, I will certainly kill you.'"

‘common thief’ (4172) and saying that Erec is not Enite’s equal (4188-90). It is again clear that Erec’s treatment of Enite causes confusion, because the Count believes that Enite should not be forced to live such a hard life anymore (4195-96). Although the Count’s opinion of Erec was doubtless negatively affected by Enite’s false tale that Erec abducted her from her home (3863-86), it must be remembered that the Count had intended to steal her from Erec even before she told him this (3830-33).

Even when a justified knightly joust occurred purely out of the desire for fame and honor, rather than over any particular difference of opinion or wrongdoing, a lady could suffer the anguish of her knight’s death. In *Erec*, Enite fears that she will lose Erec when they meet a stranger who greets Erec and Enite and immediately orders Erec to defend himself (4320-47, 4415-28). This is the first time Erec fights *Guivreiz le petîz* ‘Guivreiz the small’ (4477). This time, Erec defeats him, but the wound that Guivreiz inflicts on Erec nearly causes Erec’s death on more than one occasion, including when he fights the giants (5714-38), and the second time he encounters Guivreiz (6921-56).

Erec’s vocation is, by its very nature, a threat to Enite’s well-being. Even when the cause is justified, she fears for his life. On those occasions when he displays *unmâze* ‘immoderation’ by engaging other knights in jousts, it is doubly foolish because, not only is he risking his own life, he unnecessarily risks Enite’s safety, too. Without him, she has no protection, yet he hazards his life even when he is too weak to fight (6879-86).

One form of Enite’s suffering ends when Erec asks her to explain how they came to be in the *gewalt* ‘power’ of the count (6760-66). Up to this point during their adventure, Erec has commanded her to be silent. Now, he asks her to speak. In Chrétien’s version of the romance, Enite is silent at this juncture. Erec alone speaks and declares to her his forgiveness (Chrétien

4872-83), but in Hartmann's narrative, Erec commands her to speak, and then apologizes for punishing her so severely (6760-800). This is the only time Enite complains of Erec's treatment of her. She states that she could not have endured it longer:

si sprach: "lieber herre,
 jâ enmuote mich sô verre
 dehein ander ungemach,
 der vil âne zal geschach.
 ez huop mich allez ringe
 wider deme dinge
 daz ich iuch muoste mîden:
 solde ich daz langer lîden,
 dar umbe müeste ich doch mîn leben
 alsô schiere hân gegeben." (6804-13)⁸¹

In having Erec apologize to Enite, Hartmann turns the tables on the role of fault in the romance; rather than passing judgment on Enite's unfortunate disclosure of the rumors at court, the narrator sides with Enite. His description of Erec's behavior is likewise significant:

dô endete sich zestunt
 diu swære spæhe
 und diu vremde wæhe
 der er unz an den tac

⁸¹ 'She said: "Dear sir, no other unhappiness, of which there were many, caused me more distress as having to avoid you. All other distresses were light in comparison. If I had had to endure it longer, I would have lost my life."'

mit ir âne sache phlac,
 daz er si mit gruoze meit
 sât er mit ir von hûse reit. (6771-77)⁸²

Thus, in this narrative, in which a woman, Enite, receives the brunt of the hardship, the narrator criticizes the adversity and threats of violence to which Erec subjects Enite.

Women's relationship to violent knighthood is two-fold. A woman fears for the life of her knight, succumbing to heart-rending grief, and sometimes even death, if he dies (*Wigalois* 7701-44). On the other hand, violence is often necessary to relieve their suffering, as is the case when Erec slays two giants to restore a knight to his wife (5505-93). Where violence occurs to cause women grief, violence is usually required to restore their tranquility. There are rare occasions, however, when a woman receives comfort through non-violent means. Mabonagin's wife is one example; though Erec has defeated her husband in battle, she is comforted by Enite's friendship (9684-729).

5. Violence against the self

Because of the nature of their relationship to knighthood, ladies often appear as representatives of violence against the self. Upon leaving King Arthur's court, Erec hears a woman wailing in the woods and rides toward the sound in order to discover the cause (5293–316). He finds a lady who is so distressed that she has committed outrages against herself almost to the point of death:

ir riuwigen hende

⁸² 'Then the remarkable hardship and the strange behavior that [Erec] had shown toward her until that day without cause, that he had avoided her since they left their home, immediately ended.'

hâten daz gebende
 unschône abe gestroufet:
 zekratzet und zeroufet
 hete sich daz lîplôse wîp,
 daz ir diu wât und der lîp
 mit bluote was berunnen.
 si hâte ouch gewunnen
 von jâmer solhe swære
 daz doch niemen wære
 alsô vestes herzen,
 hæte er ir smerzen
 zuo den zîten gesehen,

 si enmüeste im erbarmen. (5320–34)⁸³

A woman in distress moved knights to action as it does here and as it does in *Wigalois*, when, for example, a dragon carries off Beleare's husband (4867-98). Such an instance occurs in *Parzival*, too, as the hero stumbles upon his cousin, Sigune, who tears out her braids and renews her intense grieving for Schionatulander day after day (138.9-139.9; 252.18-26). Sigune, however, fearing for his life, thwarts Parzival's attempt to avenge her (141.5-142.2). These examples,

⁸³ 'The lifeless lady's grief-stricken hands had roughly torn off her headdress. The unconscious woman had scratched and tousled herself, so that her clothes and body were streamed with blood. Her sufferings were so heavy that no one, even if they had the hardest heart, . . . could have looked upon it without pity.'

including the previous example from *Erec* concerning the wife of Cadoc of the land of Tafririol, who is tortured by giants (5312-428, 5644-45), show a wide breadth of circumstances in which wives may lose their knights in circumstances of violence. Again, violence conceives violence; these women, forbidden by social codes to seek vengeance,⁸⁴ suffer such grief that they violently turn their anguish against themselves.

Upon hearing this lady weeping in the woods, Erec immediately commands Enite to wait as he goes to see what the trouble is (5295-319). In this scene, Erec enters into the classic role of the noble knight rescuing the damsel in distress. The lady, too, follows her role perfectly as the helpless female victim, whose only recourse is wailing, as the narrator of *Wigalois* would put it: “nâch wîbes sit” ‘as is the custom⁸⁵ with women’ (4870). Like Beleare in *Wigalois*, this nameless lady weeps and screams at the loss of her husband (*Erec* 5312-319). Her grief has taken on such violent proportions that it has left her half dead –“îplôse” ‘lifeless’ (5324). But just as Enite’s relationship to Erec’s violence is ambivalent, violence also reveals a positive relationship with the female victim when Erec, having learned the cause of her distress, sets out to banish it or die in the attempt (5354-71).

The heroine, Enite, reacts with violence against herself when she believes that Erec is dead. As a consequence of being wounded in his fight with the Irish King Guivreiz (4378-418), Erec’s encounter with two giants leaves him depleted of strength almost to the point of death

⁸⁴ See for example Gottfried von Straßburg’s *Tristan*, in which Isolde’s mother tells her it is not the act of a noble lady to wield a sword (10133- 73). For an example of a woman who is punished for wielding a sword, see the *Nibelungenlied*, in which Kriemhild is hacked to pieces at the end of the narrative for killing the unarmed Hagen (2356, 2373-77).

⁸⁵ The word *sit* might also be translated as ‘nature.’

(5501–69, 5716–48). Erec’s “tôdes âne” ‘apparent death’ (6591) causes Enite terrible grief (5739–6114). She calls upon God, wild animals, and death to deliver her from life (5774–838, 5844–56, 5875–907). She reviles herself for undervaluing her good fortune in being married to Erec (5939–73) and attempts to commit suicide (6042–114). Enite’s longing for death is a form of violence against the self, brought about by the nature of Erec’s violent vocation.

6. *manheit* and *zagheit*

Erec must practice violence, however, in order to maintain the balance between his relationship to his wife and his reputation as a valiant knight. The crux of the *Erec* narrative is the necessity for Erec to develop *mâze* ‘moderation’ in his relationship to Enite. The knightly virtue *mâze* belongs, according to Bumke, to the “Begriffskanon der christlichen Kardinaltugenden” ‘canon of Christian cardinal virtues’ (Bumke, *Höfische Kultur* 418) and is related to the Christian virtue *temperantia* ‘moderation’. Erec’s behavior in spending all his time sleeping with his wife instead of seeking *âventiure* ‘adventure’ and engaging in knightly combat has alienated his court and led the noble community to hold him in contempt rather than honor (2966–98). The following lines evince the extent of Erec’s lack of *mâze*: “die minnete er sô sêre / daz er aller êre / durch si einen verphlac” (2968–70).⁸⁶ According to Ranawake, Erec’s fault is not that of being too passionately fond of Enite, but the sin of *acedia* ‘sloth’ (95–97). Whether or not Erec commits the sin of sloth, the text pointedly turns the blame toward his relationship with his wife; he sought: “grôzes gemaches durch sîn wîp” ‘great ease because of his wife’ (2967). The court, too, blames Enite (2996–97). Because of his love for Enite, Erec loses all sense of proportion. His fault is not a matter of *zagheit* ‘cowardice,’ but it is, nonetheless, related to it in

⁸⁶ ‘He loved her [Enite] so passionately that for her sake alone he ceased to strive for honor.’

terms of outward appearances, because Erec must repeatedly engage in knightly violence in order to retain the honor he has already won. Thus, though his reason for shirking knightly combat is not cowardice, his court nevertheless loses respect for him. It may be that, since his behavior has the appearance of cowardice, his court believes that Enite's influence has led him to lose his distinction of *manheit* 'bravery' (2685-87), i.e., that he has actually become cowardly. His bad reputation affects the entire court. The narrator states: "sîn hof wart aller vreuden bar / unde stuont nâch schanden" 'His court lacked any joy and fell into disrepute' (2989-90). Enite, too, shows great concern for Erec's reputation.

Merely seeking adventure does not resolve the situation. Erec's lack of *mâze* is a character failing. Thus, when he seeks adventure, he errs in the opposite extreme, denying a relationship with his wife. Something must occur along the journey to remedy Erec's basic fault. This remedy occurs in Erec's second encounter with Guivreiz.

In spite of the likelihood of Erec's defeat and Enite's potential repeated suffering and victimization if he should be slain, Erec feels compelled to offer knightly combat in his second encounter with Guivreiz, who, unbeknownst to him, rides with thirty knights to his aid, lest Erec be attacked by the land's inhabitants (6854-55, 6837-51). When Erec hears this "michel her" 'great troop' (6880) riding toward him, his first thought is not to protect Enite from a repetition of her former sufferings, but of his aversion to appearing cowardly and hence, his desire to fight them:

"vrouwe, ich hœre rîten
 engegen uns ein michel her.
 nû enwil ich âne wer
 alsô zagelîchen

ûzem wege niht entwîchen.

harte ringe ist mîn kraft:

doch gibe ich in ritterschaft

zeteslîcher mâze.” (6879–86)⁸⁷

Erec shows either great obstinacy or great valor in attacking a troop of knights after his near-death experience, caused by a wound by which he was rendered unconscious a short while before and on account of which he is still markedly weakened (6587-602, 6884). To him, the danger is too great that hesitation or retreat would be viewed as “zagelîchen” ‘cowardly’ (6882).

Erec’s attack stance in the middle of the road leaves Guivreiz with no choice but to engage in battle (6898-900, 6902–07). Neither questions the validity of this act of knightly violence. There is no objective reason for conflict between these two knights that should cause them to joust against each other besides the fact that they are both mutually unrecognized knights who encounter each other on a path. The two knights joust without exchanging a word (6910–23). Guivreiz does not realize that he is fighting Erec, just as Erec does not know the identity of his opponent. Kalogrenant’s remarkably uncomplicated explanation of knighthood in Hartmann’s *Iwein* seems apt here:

“nû sich, wie ich gewâfent bin:

ich heize ein riter und hân den sin,

daz ich suochende rîte

einen man der mit mir strîte,

⁸⁷ ““Lady, I hear a great troop riding toward us. Now, I do not want to turn away cowardly, without a fight. My strength is greatly depleted, but I will engage them as a knight as well as I am able.””

der gewâfent sî als ich.
 daz prîzet in, und sleht er mich:
 gesige aber ich im an,
 sô hât man mich vür einen man,
 und wirde werder danne ich sî.” (529–37)⁸⁸

When we observe the circumstances that cause Erec to be knocked from his horse for the first time in his career (6921–30), it is evident that Kalogrenant’s explanation belies the potentially fatal consequences of such an attitude. What could happen to a knight unprepared for battle is amply illustrated by Erec’s encounter with Iders and his dwarf at the beginning of the narrative; Erec is soundly beaten and loses his honor. A chance meeting with an unknown knight brought the expectation of violence. The fact that a fully armed knight was only recognizable by his heraldic device brought the possibility of error. Because of the violent nature of knighthood, under the assumption of which no questions are asked, Guivreiz nearly kills the very person he set out to protect. Similar circumstances occur in Wolfram’s *Parzival*, when for example, Gawain and Parzival unwittingly engage in combat against each other (688.11–689.24). Only when a page calls Gawain’s name does Parzival recognize his cousin, just as Guivreiz realizes the identity of Erec only after Enite begs him not to slay her husband (*Erec* 6940–59). Guivreiz then stops to ask who the knight is whom he has overpowered (6961–70).

It is in this encounter that Erec realizes the foolishness of his *unmâze*, stating that he has earned more punishment than he received (7020–23). He blames himself for the encounter and

⁸⁸ ““Now, see how I am armed. I am called a knight and have the intent to ride, seeking a man who will fight with me, who is armed as I am. He earns honor if he slays me, but if I overpower him, I become more worthy than I am now.””

asserts that he had won courage from “tumpheit” (7013). Erec would have had to stand aside in order to avoid conflict. The fact that he does not and is knocked from his horse for his pains leads him to call his behavior “unmâze” (7014). This evidence of his lack of *mâze* contradicts Ranawake’s conclusion that Erec’s enthusiastic knightly activities after falling temporarily into the sin of sloth constitute his instant recovery upon Enite’s inadvertent disclosure of his failed reputation (Ranawake 105). Erec’s attitude in taking on the unknown knight in this instance is paradoxically at the opposite extreme of his tendency to *verligen* ‘sleep too much with his wife,’ when he was lax in his duties as a knight. This time, loss of honor has taught him a necessary lesson in moderation. The narrator explains how close Erec had come in his adventures to death (7057-69). This was a direct result of his lack of moderation. In spite of the lack of this ‘cardinal Christian virtue,’ the narrator gives God at least partial credit for delivering him, for the text states that Erec owes his deliverance to God and his own bravery (7070-76).

After Erec recovers from his wound at Guivreiz’s castle, it is evident that he has won the battle over his tendency to *verligen*. The narrator tells us that he wants to leave Guivreiz’ castle because “dehein werltsache / enwas vor dem gemache / dâ er ritterschaft vant” (7252–54).⁸⁹ The correct proportion of *mâze* demands that Erec make up for his former one-sidedness by favoring the duties of knighthood (violence) over the company of his wife, but not engage in foolish acts of violence.

The host at the castle *Joie de la curt* ‘the joy of the court’ accuses the knights who have lost their lives there of a similar failing to that of which Erec accuses himself in the second encounter with Guivreiz, namely: “tumbes herzen stiure” ‘being led by a foolish heart’ (8480). These unfortunate knights were so determined to undertake *âventiure* ‘adventure’ that they

⁸⁹ ‘Nothing in the world was more enjoyable to him than knighthood.’

refused to learn from the many knights who had died before them in the attempt to defeat Mabonagrín (8474–519). Consequently, their pursuit of *âventiure* ends in death. These knights may have been guilty of *übermuot* ‘arrogance/presumption’ in attacking Mabonagrín, but this accusation is difficult to justify because, if they had turned away from the challenge of defeating this formidable foe, they would have been guilty of cowardice.

This is why Guivreiz and King Ivreins are unsuccessful in their attempt to dissuade Erec from fighting the knight in the garden. They hope that in so doing Erec might escape the fate of the eighty knights who have thus died. This effort to dissuade him introduces a principle of knighthood that recurs in other Arthurian legends – that endeavors to instill fear into a knight tend to result in the opposite effect from the one intended. Often, these attempts force the knight to engage in the violence from which others attempt to dissuade him. When Nereja suggests that a joust with their potential host would be too dangerous for Wigalois in Wirnt’s narrative, he states his determination to undertake the battle: ““od ich verliuse swaz ich hân”” ““or I will lose what I have”” (1962). In other words, if he does not undertake the battle and succeed, he will lose his honor. The host at *Joie de la curt* is similarly convinced that Erec will die at the hands of his nephew:

“ich bringe iuch an in, ob ich mac.
 doch râte ich iu mit triuwen daz
 daz ir iuch noch bedenket baz:
 daz selbe dunket mich ein sin,
 wan unde komet ir dar in,
 sô riuwet ir mich sêre,

wan sô gesehet ir uns nie mêre.” (8581-87)⁹⁰

In Erec’s case, all of his host’s discouragement increases his anticipation of the honor that he will receive in the event of defeating the formidable opponent who has already conquered so many worthy knights (8520-75). As in the case of Erec’s second encounter with Guivreiz, this could either be taken as obstinacy or valor, but Guivreiz’s and King Ivreins’s discouragement make it impossible for Erec to turn away without appearing to be a coward.

It is at this point in the narrative that Erec again shows his obeisance to God by going to mass to pray that he will survive his anticipated encounter with Mabonagrín (8632-44). The only other time Erec engages in religious practices is prior to the tournament that follows his wedding (2487-500). Thus, the only references to Erec going to chapel and taking communion occur before his loss of *mâze* when he sleeps with Enite and after he regains *mâze* in his second encounter with Guivreiz. Considering the fact that the narrator calls obeisance to God a knightly act (2489-500), the fact that Erec fails to engage in it between these two events is significant. One could argue that he lacked the opportunity to attend mass prior to many of the encounters while he wandered with Enite, but that the opportunity avails itself so soon after he regains his sense of *mâze* signals a return to his proper sphere as a knight and in his relationship with God. The text is silent about the religious obeisance that the eighty unfortunate knights may or may not have practiced before their respective encounters with the knight Mabonagrín. The narrator later adds significance to this scene, however, by emphasizing the importance of such

⁹⁰ ““I will bring you to him if I can. But I advise you earnestly that you think better of it.

I think that would be better: because, if you go to him, then I will regret it, because you will never see us again.””

observances. When Erec returns to his kingdom after the conclusion of his adventures, the narrator states:

er tete sam die wîsen tuont,
 die des gote genâde sagent
 swaz si êren bejagent
 und ez von im wellent hân.
 sô triuget manegen ein wân
 der in benamen beswîchet,
 sô er sich des muotes rîchet,
 ob im iht guotes widervert,
 daz im daz sî beschert
 niuwan von sîner vrûmekeit,
 unds gote dehein genâde seit.
 vil lîhte ein ende des geschiht. (10085-96)⁹¹

What is significant in the Mabonagrín episode is that Erec does engage in this religious ritual, acknowledging the fact that the outcome of the battle is in God's hands.

Erec's battle with the Red Knight, Mabonagrín, is justifiable knightly combat. Though Erec's reason for seeking battle with Mabonagrín is to attain great honor, he would in any case be justified in seeking battle with him in order to achieve vengeance for the eighty women who

⁹¹ 'He did as the wise do, who give thanks to God for the honor that they receive and view it as a gift from Him. Some fool themselves into thinking they have received (this honor) purely as a result of their own prowess and do not give God thanks for it. Such things come quickly to an end.'

have lost their husbands to him. Furthermore, the circumstances in which Mabonagrín and his wife live mean that Mabonagrín must be defeated in order to be delivered from an unnatural and – for Mabonagrín – unhappy mode of existence (9443-567). Nonetheless, when Erec defeats his opponent, Mabonagrín insists that Erec tell him his name and his social class because he would rather die than suffer the shame of being bested by someone of ignoble birth (9340-65). Jones confirms that in the medieval era there was great shame in being defeated by a man of lower social status (61). Mabonagrín is content to live when he learns that he has been defeated by a nobleman (9235-378).

This is the third instance in the narrative when defeat leads, not to further animosity, but to friendship between the two combatants. The first instance was between Iders and Erec. The second was between Guivreiz and Erec. In this third instance (9387-97), Mabonagrín is grateful to Erec for delivering him from a situation in which his wife, because of her jealousy, has forced him to stay in the garden with her until he encounters a knight who defeats him before her eyes (9443-567). Mabonagrín calls his defeat: “ein schadelôse schande” ‘a painless shame’ (9584), because the experience delivers him from this imprisonment. Although Mabonagrín’s wife is unhappy when Mabonagrín is defeated (9683-98), this event restores the proper roles of man and wife (9583-609).

7. Chapter conclusion

Nearly all of the violence that one encounters in *Erec* occurs either primarily or secondarily because of the desire for *êre*. Sometimes *êre* is the immediate cause of violence, such as in the first instance, when loss of honor for Erec means increased honor for Iders and his dwarf. Since Erec is the main protagonist and Iders a villain, Erec must defeat Iders, thereby

resetting the balance in Erec's favor. At other times and, in fact, most often, *êre* forms the background to the situations in which Erec and Enite find themselves. Without the loss of honor that Erec and Enite both suffer as a result of his tendency to *verligen*, none of the subsequent violent encounters would occur. In all of these encounters, though *êre* is not always the immediate cause of violence, it is still the prime motivator, because Erec sets out on this adventure in order to regain honor. Just as Erec pursues Iders in order to regain his honor after he suffered shame, so, too, does Erec pursue adventure in order to recover lost honor. The crux of the narrative is that Erec must learn to act with *mâze* in order to retain *êre*. By the end of the narrative, Erec has regained his *mâze*, which means that he can now return to his court as an *êrenhafter ritter* 'honorable knight.'

The violent acts in *Erec* that occur for reasons other than the attainment of *êre*, are enacted by characters other than Erec, such as the dwarf at the beginning of the narrative or the giants who torture a knight for reasons known only to themselves (5381-455). Even one of these giants, however, speaks of the desire to attain *êre*: (5476-84). Oringles, too, acts with *êrenlôse* (dishonorable) violence against Enite. These characters provide the catalysts of unknightly conduct that Erec battles to attain/regain *êre*.

There are many instances of the suffering of women in *Erec*. Erec, Enite, and their court all suffer when Erec loses honor after his marriage (2985-3008). When Erec refrains for an extended period from engaging in the acts of violence that define his vocation, his court falls into ill repute and blames Enite. Enite, therefore, suffers not only Erec's punishments after he learns of the decline of his reputation at court, but also the court's disdain. She furthermore fears for his life every time he engages in those acts of violence in which he must engage to regain his *êre*. Other women suffer in *Erec*, too, when their knights engage in battle. The nameless lady whose

husband is captured by giants suffers when she believes he is dead. Mabonagrín's wife grieves when he loses in battle to Erec.

It is evident from the above list, however, that Erec's journey to recover his honor has positive effects on the world around him. As a result of his pursuit of adventure, he defeats the two giants and reunites the grief-stricken lady with her husband, and, though Mabonagrín's wife weeps at her loss, Erec delivers Mabonagrín from his bondage in the garden. Enite no longer suffers the court's disdain because of Erec's disgrace, nor does the narrator mention Enite's fear for Erec's life again after the final battle with Mabonagrín. Once Erec regains his *mâze*, Enite is also restored to his good graces.

The narrator represents knightly violence as positive in *Erec*. Just as his battle with Iders and the celebratory tournament after his wedding bring Erec honor, so, too, do the battles he engages in after he sets out with Enite to seek adventure. During the only battle in which Erec loses honor after this point—the second battle with Guivreiz—he is so weakened by a wound in his side that the reader can hardly credit it as dishonorable, and Erec learns *mâze* from the experience. The many positive effects Erec has on the world around him are the direct result of violence rather than from any other attempt to reconcile differences. When Erec does endeavor to attain a peaceful resolution without violence, as he does with the two giants (5487-503), the attempt fails. Violence is a force for both good and evil in *Erec*, but evil is overcome and honor attained through violence. This first Arthurian romance in Middle High German sets the stage for the positive reception and valorization of the violent vocation of knighthood.

Hartmann von Aue's *Iwein*: Violence exceeding the bounds of *mâze*

1. Introduction

By the time Hartmann's *Iwein* appeared in 1203, courtly culture was still a relatively new concept in Germany, but the narrator still writes of the glorious days of King Arthur as a bygone era. He rejoices that he did not live during the time in which the Knights of the Round Table pursued honor and adventures, because, if he had lived then, he would not have the opportunity to tell of their deeds now (48-58). The prolog speaks almost immediately of King Arthur's knightly deeds:

künek Artûs der guote,
 der mit rîters muote
 nâch lobe kunde strîten.
 er hât bî sînen zîten
 gelebet alsô schön
 daz er der êren krône
 dô truoc und noch sîn name treit. (5-11)⁹²

The famous deeds that won Arthur and other knights such fame normally involved battle – deeds of violence. The importance of fighting in defining knighthood is evinced in Kalogrenant's explanation of the vocation to a wild man (529–37). He explains that knights actively sought other knights against whom they could prove their mettle and prowess. The object, as was seen in the previous chapter with Erec's enthusiasm for the opportunity to fight Mabonagrîn

⁹² 'King Arthur the Good fought with such knightly courage that he won praise. During his lifetime he lived so well that he wore the crown of honor and his name still bears it to this day.'

(8520-75), was to defeat one's opponent in order to increase one's honor. Thus, Kalogrenant makes the request of the wild man to tell him if he knows of any opportunity to fight: "wand ich nâch anders niht envar" 'because I set out for no other reason' (542). Kalogrenant, like all knights, wants to increase his honor.

2. Seeking honor

Sometimes knights used violence to achieve justice or vengeance for themselves or for others, as when Wigalois sets out on a grand adventure in Wirnt's narrative to achieve justice and vengeance for Larie and her mother, whose kingdom has been stolen from them.

Sometimes, however, they fought purely for the sake of attaining or maintaining honor. Erec loses all respect in Hartmann's earlier narrative, not because he fails to achieve justice for the oppressed or victimized, but because, in the period following his marriage to Enite, he fails to engage in knightly violence of any kind (*Erec* 2928-73). The narrator of *Iwein* makes a similar but mild criticism of Keie who lies down to rest: "ze gemache ân êre stuont sîn sin" 'his goal was comfort rather than honor' (76). Though Arthur and Ginover also go to their chamber to sleep, the language describing their behavior is very different from that which describes Keie.

Der künec und diu künegin

.....

wâren gegangen

in eine kemenâten dâ

und heten sich slâfen sâ

mê durch gesellschaft geleit

dan durch deheine trâkheit. (77-84) ⁹³

There is no suggestion in the above lines of a lack of honor; Arthur already has a reputation for courageous knightly deeds. Whereas Arthur and Ginover lie down for companionship, however, the narrator pointedly expresses Keie's insouciant attitude toward honor; he would rather seek comfort than pursue honor. The fact that the narrator makes such a disparaging statement about Keie leads the reader to assume that this particular member of the Round Table has a reputation for indolence. A knight could not have an honorable reputation without engaging in violence.

The above excerpt underscores the balance of honor; when one knight defeats another, he wins honor to the extent that the other loses honor (Jones 20). This idea is evinced when King Ascalon, the knight who protects the fountain, defeats Kalogrenant, easily sending him flying off his horse, states: "der prîs was sîn und mîn diu schame" 'The honor was his and mine the shame' (756). Kalogrenant's quest for honor has backfired, as he has proved to be an unworthy opponent for the protector of the fountain, King Ascalon, who easily sends him flying off his horse (740-46). According to Hartmann, the more formidable the opponent, the greater the honor his opponent wins at his defeat (*Erec* 8520-75). Kalogrenant's defeat has the effect of increasing the reader's perception of the formidability of the knight of the fountain. Iwein, therefore, has the opportunity to increase his honor proportionately. That is why he is so anxious to reach the fountain before King Arthur and his men; he is afraid that Gawein may precede him and, therefore, seize the opportunity to achieve honor before Iwein arrives (893-948). In order for Iwein's valorous deeds to be recognized, however, he needs witnesses. Rather than slaying

⁹³ 'The king and the queen . . . had gone into the chamber there and laid themselves down to sleep more for the sake of companionship than because of tiredness.'

the lord of the forest immediately, Iwein chases him to his palace in the hope of being observed slaying him (1032-74).

The balance between *manheit* ‘bravery’ and an “unwîser muot” ‘foolishness’ (635) is difficult to weigh in Middle High German literature. Kalogrenant’s defeat in the adventure of the fountain leads him to attribute his decision in pouring water on the rock to foolishness. When Iwein achieves victory in the same adventure, he wins honor. Similarly, Erec attributes his failure in his second encounter with Guivreiz to “unmâze” (*Erec* 7014) and calls himself a “tumber man” ‘foolish man’ (7012). Yet the estimation of himself as foolish does not stop Erec from battling the knight Mabonagrîn, against whom other famous knights have foolishly lost their lives (8474-562). The example from *Erec* shows that the foolishness or wisdom of attacking an opponent must be determined by *mâze*, but no such consideration is apparent in the Kalogrenant episode. Kalogrenant’s conclusion that pouring water on the rock was foolish is predicated upon his failure to best his opponent, King Ascalon.

In contrast to Kalogrenant, who does not know quite what will happen, Iwein approaches the adventure fully aware of the consequences of this action, setting the violent storm in motion in order to provoke the knight of the fountain, so that Iwein can exact vengeance (803-09). But just as avenging a death cannot return the dead to life, so Iwein’s defeat of the knight of the fountain cannot win Kalogrenant honor; Iwein increases his own honor through this act of vengeance.

3 The violence of *minne*

The narrator speaks of “vrou Minne” ‘Lady Love’ (1537) in vivid terms of violence. *Vrou Minne* does not sound at all like an endearing enchantress, but a force that takes delight in victimizing Iwein:

vrou Minne nam die oberen hant,
 daz sî in vienc und bant.
 sî bestuont in mit überkraft,
 und twanc in des ir meisterschaft,
 daz er herzeminne
 truoc sîner vîendinne,
 diu im ze tôde was gehaz.
 ouch wart diu vrouwe an im baz
 gerochen danne ir wære kunt:
 wan er was tœtlichen wunt.
 die wunden sluoc der Minnen hant.
 ez ist der wunden alsô gewant,
 sî wellent daz sî langer swer
 dan diu von swerte ode von sper. (1537-50)⁹⁴

The above passage, using war-like language, describes the violence with which lady Love forces Iwein to love King Ascalon's wife, Laudine (1540-43). The word *kraft* (1520) with respect to love is translated as *Gewalt* in the modern German translation by Manfred Stange. Similarly, the term "überkraft" (1539) is translated as "Allgewalt" 'all-powerful force.' The narrator also uses

⁹⁴ 'Lady Love took the upper hand. She took him prisoner and bound him. Her attack was all-powerful and she forced him with her art, so that he was deeply in love with his enemy who harbored a deadly hatred toward him. She was better avenged on him than she knew, because he was mortally wounded. These wounds were struck by lady Love's hand and they are such that they take longer to heal than those from sword or spear.'

the word *gewalt*: “im wart nâch ir alsô wê, / daz diu Minne nie gewan / grœzern gewalt an deheinen man” (1606-08).⁹⁵ According to Warren C. Brown, the rhetorical use of violence can be used to awaken sympathy (8). Thus, the description of lady Love in terms of violence awakens the reader’s sympathy for Iwein because it evokes a sense of helplessness. Iwein expresses his anguish to God for being afflicted with love for the woman whose husband he has slain (1609-20). His only hope is that *vrou Minne* exercises her power as strongly on the lady as she has on him (1621-38, 1647-61).

Iwein’s hope is fulfilled, for the influence of *minne* extends also to the lady, but not before she voices her resistance to marrying after the untimely death of her husband. Laudine must have a man to protect the land or she will lose it. When Laudine suggests to her maiden that she seek a man who would guard the land without marrying her, Lunete disparages this suggestion as foolishness:

“daz sî iuch widerseit.
wer wær der sich sô grôz arbeit
iemer genæme durch iuch an,
erne wære iuwer man?” (1917-20)⁹⁶

In spite of Laudine’s initial anger at the suggestion, Lunete convinces Laudine that Iwein, having bested the king, is the strongest knight in the land (1955-77, 2009-38). The *gewalt* of *minne* plays a significant role in reconciling the queen to accepting Iwein as her husband (2054-57).

⁹⁵ ‘He suffered such longing for her that lady Love never exercised greater power over any man.’

⁹⁶ “‘I would dispute that. Who would take on such great toil on your behalf without being your husband?’”

4. Guilt and Innocence

Of the two states, guilt and innocence, the latter is usually ignored in Middle High German literature. One instance in which apparent innocence is ignored even on the cosmic level recounts the purgatorial suffering of King Jorel in *Wigalois* (3666-732, 4658-70).⁹⁷ King Jorel's knights, though innocent of actual wrongdoing, share his suffering (4708-28). Another example is Parzival, who is guilty of a crime of which he was completely ignorant of having committed at the time – that of failing to show Anfortas compassion (*Parzival* 315.26-316.10). Parzival might have been inclined to argue that Gurnemanz told him not to ask too many questions (171.17), but, to the medieval mind, he is still guilty. Similarly, when Kalogrenant protests his innocence in the face of King Ascalon's ire, the king merely tells him to defend himself (*Iwein* 731-36). There was no conception of "innocent until proven guilty." A medieval version of this phrase in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* might have expressed the idea: "Guilty until you are victorious," since the only viable way to prove one's innocence was to overcome one's accuser or his representative in combat. Unfortunately for King Jorel, one cannot win in armed combat against God.⁹⁸ Kalogrenant's ignorance of the consequences of pouring water on the stone is irrelevant to the question of guilt or innocence.

Iwein's guilt in killing King Ascalon is equally fraught with ambivalence. It is clear that Iwein kills Ascalon in an act of justifiable knightly combat. After Iwein has poured water on the stone (989-93), King Ascalon, "des selben waldes herre" 'the lord of the forest' (1001), challenges him:

⁹⁷ For more details on this episode, see the chapter on *Wigalois*, pp. 173-76.

⁹⁸ There is, however, a biblical instance of a man prevailing against God in a fight, namely the wrestling between Jehovah and Jacob (Gen. 32.22-28).

der gruozte in harte verre
 als vîent sînen vîent sol:
 ouch verstuont sich her Îwein wol,
 daz er sich weren solde,
 ob er niht dulden wolde
 beide laster unde leit.
 ir ietweder was hereit
 ûf des anderen schaden:
 sî hete beide überladen
 grôz ernest unde zorn.
 sî nâmen diu ors mitten sporn. (1002-12)⁹⁹

According to the unwritten rules of knightly combat, Iwein has every right to kill Ascalon. First, Ascalon has challenged him, and second, Iwein must defend himself. The above excerpt expresses the intention of both knights; the word “schaden” (1009) can be translated as ‘harm’ or ‘injury.’ Both knights, each a *vîent* ‘enemy’ to the other, are aware that this battle could mean death for one of them. Even in a tournament, which the nobility arranged more for spectacle than for battle in the High and later Middle Ages (Bumke 359), it was understood that accidental deaths could occur (376, 378). In the joust between Iwein and Ascalon, it is evident from their

⁹⁹ ‘He (Ascalon) greeted him (Iwein) from a great distance as a foe should greet his enemy. Sir Iwein also understood very well that he should defend himself if he did not want to suffer dishonor and harm. Each was ready to defeat the other. They were both overburdened with great hunger for battle and wrath. They spurred their horses on.’

“grôz ernest unde zorn” ‘great battle hunger and wrath’ (1011) that this is a serious fight and not for mere show.

Although Iwein killed Ascalon in justified knightly combat, he is still guilty of murder in the eyes of Ascalon’s court.¹⁰⁰ The men of the palace want to kill Iwein in order to take vengeance on him for killing their king (1155-68). No mediator appears as Count Adan does in *Wigalois* (7908-40) to protect Iwein and defend his right to kill Ascalon. Iwein hides from them with the aid of a magic ring that makes him invisible (1201-11, 1258-95). The dead man gives Iwein’s presence away, however, for, according to legend, a victim will bleed in the presence of his murderer.¹⁰¹ The men of the castle renew their search with vigor when the corpse bleeds (1355-79).

When the men of the court fail to discover Iwein, Queen Laudine places the blame for Ascalon’s death on God:

sî sprach: “herre, ich hân verlorn

vîl wunderlîchen mînen man:

dâ bist dû eine schuldec an.

dû hetest an in geleit

die kraft und die manheit,

daz im von gehiuren dingen

¹⁰⁰ A similar circumstance occurs in *Tristan* when Tristan kills Morold in battle (7050-85). Tristan, wounded with a poisoned sword, must conceal his identity from the Irish, so that Queen Isolde will heal him (6917-52, 7394-429, 7547-606).

¹⁰¹ For another instance of a man’s corpse bleeding in the presence of his murderer, see *Das Nibelungenlied* (1043-44).

nie mohte misselingen.
 ez ist niewan alsô komen:
 der im den lîp hat genomen,
 daz ist ein unsihtic geist.
 got herre, wie wol dû weist,
 swer ez anders wære
 niuwan ein zouberære
 des heter sich vil wol erwert.
 im was eht dirre tôt beschert.” (1382-96)¹⁰²

Laudine’s suffering is evinced in her anger against God for sending, as she falsely believes, a magician to slay her husband. From her perspective, even God is guilty for being the cause of her grief. She imagines that God has destined Ascalon to die.

Laudine’s protestation that God alone is to blame for her husband’s death (1384) does not absolve Iwein from guilt in her eyes; she states: “Swer er ist der in sluoc, / wider den hân ich schulde gnuoc, / daz ich im vîent sî” (2039-41).¹⁰³ Immediately afterward, however, she contemplates his innocence, attempting to reason with herself after her husband’s death (2039-49). The narrator states that Laudine frees Iwein from guilt by justifying his actions; she

¹⁰² ““Lord, I have lost my husband, and it is incomprehensible how this occurred. You alone are to blame for this. You gave him the strength and bravery so that he could never fail in normal circumstances. Now, it has so happened that an invisible creature has taken his life. Lord God, as you know well, if it had been anyone other than a magician, he (my husband) would have been able to resist. Obviously, he was destined to die this way.””

¹⁰³ ““Whoever killed my husband, I have reason enough to consider him my enemy.””

claims that Iwein was only defending himself (2050-53). In mentioning the *gewalt* of *minne* in this passage, the narrator gives *minne* credit for reconciling Iwein to the queen, suggesting therewith that such reconciliation would otherwise not have been possible. Only a few lines later, the queen convinces herself that Iwein would be a good mate for her:

“weizgot ich lâze mînen zorn,
ob ez sich gevüegen kan
und enger niuwan des selben man,
der mir den wirt erslagen hât.” (2062-65)¹⁰⁴

Queen Laudine believes that Iwein’s treatment of her should be so much the better because of the pain he has already caused her (2066-72). Whatever her true estimation of Iwein’s guilt, she cannot prevail against the force of *minne*; she forgives him.

Iwein’s iniquities do not end with Lord Ascalon’s death. Just as Hartmann’s earlier narrative, *Erec*, revolves around the hero’s lack of *mâze* ‘moderation’, so, too, does *Iwein*. The difference in the two narratives lies in the direction that this failing takes. There is no criticism of knightly violence either implicit or explicit in this work (Hasty 13), but Iwein’s lack of *mâze* in pursuing knightly violence, and the honor he might receive from it, ultimately cause Iwein to lose not only his honor, but his sense of identity (Cormeau 210). Whereas Erec indulged too much in his desire for his wife, Iwein errs in the opposite extreme, largely because of Gawein’s warning not to make the same mistake that Erec did (*Iwein* 2787-98). We encounter a typical motif in Middle High German literature in Iwein’s asking Laudine to grant him a favor without first explaining the nature of that favor (2913-18). She accedes but regrets it as soon as she

¹⁰⁴ ““God knows: I will let my anger go, and if it so happens, I desire none other than this man who has slain my husband.””

learns what the favor entails; Iwein wants to go with Gawein to engage in tournaments (2919-23). Laudine commands him to return within one year or she will scorn him forever (2924-44). Despite his assurances that he would not be absent for any greater amount of time (2929-34), Iwein fails to return within one year:

man saget daz mîn her Gâwein in
mit guoter handelunge
behabte unde betwunge
daz er der jârzal vergaz
und sîn gelübde versaz,
und daz ander jâr gevienc
und vaste in den ougest gienc. (3052-58) ¹⁰⁵

Laudine's resulting contempt provides the adversity against which Iwein must prevail and which forces him to learn moderation.

To the modern reader, it may seem that characters such as Parzival, who sins in ignorance, and Iwein, who kills in self-defense, are to some extent innocent of their crimes, but there are few examples in Middle High German Arthurian legends of individuals who are actually punished for a crime they did not commit. Jeschute's unfortunate fate in *Parzival* springs immediately to mind (132.25-133.14, 135.25-136.8), but beyond this example and that of Lunete, one would have to widen one's interpretation of punishment for a crime to find others. The reader may feel pity for Iwein when he laments losing his wife's good favor and his honor

¹⁰⁵ It is said that my lord Gawein showed him such friendship and urged him so much that he forgot the appointed day at the end of the year and broke his promise, so that the second year began and the days quickly passed into August.

(*Iwein* 3960-4010), but one must admit that he got what he deserved; he did not heed Laudine's warning to return within a year (2940-44). In contrast to *Iwein*, Lunete is innocent of the crime of which she is accused:

“ez nam in dem jâre vert
des landes vrouwe einen man:
dâ missegienc ir leider an:
die schulde legent sî ûf mich.” (4054-57)¹⁰⁶

Lunete's crime amounts to nothing more than giving bad advice but, out of envy, others convince the Queen that Lunete is responsible for her unhappiness, that she has, in fact, betrayed her queen (4109-26, 4134-35). Unfortunately, Lunete does not have the advantage of being a knight who can prove his innocence with the lance or sword:

“sî beitent mir unz morgen:
sô nement sî mir ouch den lîp.
wan ich bin leider ein wîp,
daz ich mich mit kampfe iht wer:
so enist ouch niemen der mich ner.” (4070-74)¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ ““A year ago, the lady of this land married a man. Unfortunately, it did not go well for her and they blame me for it.””

¹⁰⁷ ““They have given me until morning. Then, they will take my life, because, unfortunately, I am a woman, who cannot defend herself in combat. Neither is there anyone who will rescue me.””

The above passage provides evidence of the belief that one could prove one's innocence in single combat. Because Lunete is a woman, however, she must have a representative to fight for her (4080-101).

Lunete is partly responsible for her unfortunate circumstances, namely, being imprisoned in a chapel to await her death (4011-17, 4038-41). She had previously allowed her anger to get the better of her and challenged her three accusers:

“ich sprach durch mînen zorn,
 swelhe drîe die tiursten man
 sich von dem hove næmen an
 daz siz beredten wider mich,
 einen rîter vund ich
 der mit allen drin strîte,
 ob man vierzec tage bite” (4146-52).¹⁰⁸

Lunete falsely assumed that, within the time stated, she would be able to find either Gawein or Iwein, who would fight for her (4087-97, 4175-78). Unfortunately, Lunete could neither go back on her word, nor find either of the two knights she sought (4153-61, 4162-68).

Although, as stated above, Lunete is partly responsible for her imprisonment, it is also true that she is merely a scapegoat for Iwein's crime. Laudine blamed first Iwein, then God for the loss of her husband. Now, because others have maligned Lunete, Laudine blames her for purposely encouraging her to marry a disloyal knight. Laudine's grief and Lunete's position as a favored maidservant to the queen made Lunete a ready target for the envy of others (4110-18).

¹⁰⁸ “I said in my anger: if the three best men of the court are ready to accuse me, I will find a knight within forty days who will fight for me.”

The text speaks of the three accusers' treatment of her in terms of *gewalt* and indicates how fragile her reputation is in the face of their accusations:

“nû velschent sî mich sêre,
ich habe sî verrâten.
wand sî mir dô tâten
michel unreht unde gewalt,
dô wart mîn leit vil manecvalt.” (4134-38)¹⁰⁹

She is caught up, through Iwein's imperfect grasp of chivalry, in the system of chivalric violence with no personal recourse to action. Thus, it has come to pass that Iwein's lack of *mâze* has injured not only Laudine, but Lunete as well, and the blame for his failing is attributed not only to Iwein, but also to God and Lunete.

The seriousness of her accusers' claims becomes evident with the description of Lunete's impending punishment:

dô was diu jungcvrouwe genomen
her ûz dâ sî gevangen lac
.....
und wâren ir in den stunden
die hende gebunden,
ir cleider von ir getân
und niuwan ir hemde an verlân,
und diu hurt was bereit

¹⁰⁹ ““They calumniated me, accusing me of betraying her. When they did me great injustice and violence, my sufferings were manifold.””

und daz viur dar under geleit. (5148-56)¹¹⁰

For Lunete's supposed act of treason, she is to be burned at the stake. Though Iwein promised to return to fight her accusers, Lunete despairs of rescue in this scene, commending herself to God (5157-60). Lunete is certainly the victim of *gewalt* in this scene, which has been organized not only to kill her as punishment for her "crime," but to humiliate her as well, as evinced by the removal of her clothes. Mirroring the fate of the hapless knights in the previous scene of violence (4930-31), Lunete's clothes are removed, an act that, perhaps to the satisfaction of her three accusers (4110-18), can only aim at the removal of her dignity.

Unfortunately for the three accusers, Iwein appears in the nick of time to challenge them in order to prove Lunete's innocence (5161-74).

Nû was ez ze den zîten site
 daz der schuldegære lite
 den selben tôten den der man
 solde lîden den er an
 mit kampfe vor gerihte sprach,
 ob ez alsô geschach
 daz er mit kampfe unschuldec wart. (5429-35)¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ 'The maiden was taken out from where she lay imprisoned . . . and then her hands were tied. All her clothes except for her shirt were taken from her. The brushwood was ready and lit with fire.'

¹¹¹ 'It was at that time the custom that the accuser suffered the same death that the accused was to suffer, whom the accuser had challenged to a fight, if it so happened that the fight proved the innocence of the accused.'

It is not surprising that the concept of the accuser being punished with the same punishment he had planned for others should appear in the literature of an era that was so bound up with the precepts of Christianity and the concept of a violent God who meted out retribution as freely as his followers (Brown 90). The concept of a wicked individual falling into his own trap is a biblical principle (Psalm 9.15) that happens to coincide with the medieval thirst for vengeance and the concept of divine intervention: if the accused were “proven” innocent in a judicial duel, the vindicated individual had a right to vengeance.¹¹² The authority that had prepared the executionary pyre for a half-naked, defenseless woman could not prove squeamish about fueling it with the flesh of her unjust accusers; the two who had the misfortune to survive Iwein’s attack die in the flames (5436-37).

The belief in the justice of the outcome of a judicial combat was total. When Iwein defeats Lunete’s accusers, Laudine takes the maiden back into her favor (5445-49). Laudine realizes that she was wrong to accuse Lunete of treason; she makes it up to her, to the end of her days (5450).

5. When violence is unbecoming

At times, exercising one’s *gewalt* in the sense of ‘authority’ or ‘power’ could result in a breach of etiquette. It was expected that a knight exact vengeance, but there are occasions in Middle High German literature when vengeance would be unseemly. Usually, these circumstances involve the question of women avenging themselves on others. In *Wigalois*, the

¹¹² The medieval idea of one’s “right” to vengeance proved to be difficult to eradicate in the twelfth century. Brown records that the attempt to arbitrate between two rival factions led at least on one occasion to the assassination of the peace-loving meddler, Charles the Good of Flanders, by those who “cherished their personal right to violence” (170).

group of maidens who grieve for their lord Roaz want to kill Wigalois as he lies unconscious on the floor, but Count Adan states that it would be an outrage to slay him after he has justly won his battle against Roaz for the love of a lady (7919-44). Isolde in Gottfried's *Tristan* provides another example of violence unbecoming when she threatens to kill Tristan for slaying her uncle; her mother states that it is not the act of a noble lady to wield weapons (10133-73). In the *Nibelungenlied*, Kriemhild provides the ultimate example of the unseemliness of female violence, for her machinations cause the annihilation of the Burgundians (1539-40, 2377). When Kriemhild finally murders the defenseless Hagen with her own hands (2373), Hildebrand is so incensed that he hacks her to bits (2375-77), the death of a monster, and not a human being. Even though Hagen killed Etzel and Kriemhild's son, Ortlieb (1961), the king still laments the warrior's death at the hands of a woman:

“Wâfen”, sprach der fürste, “wie ist nu tôt gelegen
 von eines wîbes handen der aller beste degen,
 der ie kom ze sturme oder ie schilt getruoc!
 swie vînt ich im wære, ez ist mir leide genuoc.” (2374)¹¹³

It is obvious that, whatever cause Kriemhild may seem to have had after Hagen had murdered both her husband, Siegfried (981-83), and her son by Etzel, the men still deemed it their province to engage in violence. Kriemhild's example shows that a woman's vengeance was not only inappropriate, but dangerous, both to the object(s) of her wrath and to herself. When Iwein enters Laudine's presence, although Laudine would have the power to kill him or have him

¹¹³ ““Oh, no,” said the king. “How is it that the greatest of all warriors who ever rode out to fight or held a shield now lies dead at the hands of a woman! Even though I was his enemy, I grieve to see it.””

killed, she states that, since Iwein freely submits to her authority, it would be unwomanly to kill him (2291-99).

6. Controlled violence

Part of the task of knights was to control violence in its more malevolent forms, or, perhaps better expressed, to control maliciously violent individuals and groups. Kaeuper informs us that the violence of knights was a necessary component in the struggle for existence in a rapidly changing medieval world (*Chivalry and Violence* 13, 22). The endeavor to quell unwanted violence is at the root of Iwein's deliverance from insanity. Three women, including the Lady of Narison, stumble upon him and recognize him as he sleeps. They rapidly come to view Iwein as a potential defender. One of the maidens speaks to her lady of the possibility that Iwein could deliver them from violence:

“und ich weiz daz als mînen tôt,
vrouwe, daz alle iuwer nôt,
die iu durch sînen übermuot
der grâve Âliers lange tuot
und noch ze tuonne willen hât,
der wirt iu buoz unde rât,
ob er von uns wirt gesunt.” (3407-13).¹¹⁴

The maiden relates this information as if to convince her lady to cure Iwein. She emphasizes the necessity of healing Iwein by insisting that he is the only one capable of rescuing them from the dreaded Count Aliers: “und sult ir ouch vor im genesen, / daz muoz mit sîner hilfe wesen”

¹¹⁴ ““And I am dead certain, lady, that, if we heal him, this knight will remedy all the distress that Count Aliers has brought on us and still plans to do because of his arrogance.””

(3417-18).¹¹⁵ Whether the lady would have cured Iwein without the threat of further violence from Aliers is unclear, but, when he aids the knights in her service to defeat Aliers, the text states:

sîne rou dehein daz guot
 daz sî an in hete geleit:
 wand sîn eines manheit
 diu tetes unstätelîchen
 an einen vurt entwîchen. (3728-32)¹¹⁶

The above passage may imply that the lady could have regretted healing Iwein if he had proved useless in defending her from Aliers, but, alternatively, the passage may also merely be an example of the tendency of Middle High German Arthurian legends to express a positive in the negative, i.e., she was glad she had healed him. In either case, it is clear that she rejoices in Iwein's healing because of the fact that he acts, subsequent to his healing, as her deliverer from unjustified violence. After Iwein captures Aliers, the narrator speaks of this defeated opponent as being "in der vrouwen gewalt" 'in the power of the lady' (3779).

The narrator recalls and dismisses the necessity of protecting the fountain and Laudine's land as he finds it convenient; after the death of King Ascalon, it is of paramount importance, but, when Iwein fails to return within one year, it would appear that Laudine is capable of taking

¹¹⁵ ““And if you are to be delivered from the count, it can only occur with his (Iwein's) help””

¹¹⁶ ‘She did not regret at all the good that she had done him, for his bravery alone caused the fickle enemy to flee until he reached a ford.’

care of herself.¹¹⁷ After the death of King Ascalon, the impetus for Laudine to marry is strong, especially when she learns that King Arthur is coming with a band of knights to take control of the fountain (2405-15). The language Laudine uses is full of urgency:

“stüende mir mîn ahte und mîn guot

als ez andern vrouwen tuot,

daz ich iuwer niht enwolde

sô gâhes noch ensolde

gnâde gevâhen.

nû muoz ich leider gâhen:

wandez ist mir sô gewant,

ich mac verliesen wol mîn lant

hiute oder morgen.

daz muoz ich ê besorgen

mit einem manne der ez wer:

.....

des muoz ich in vil kurzen tagen

mir einen herren kiesen

ode daz lant verliesen.” (2305-20)¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ As Corneau and Störmer point out, the connection between the fountain and Laudine’s domain remains vague (198).

¹¹⁸ ““If my situation and my holdings were such as they are for other ladies, I would not show you mercy so quickly. But, unfortunately, I must hurry, because my circumstances are

The iterations of “gâhes” ‘quickly’ (2308), “gâhen” ‘hurry’ (2310), “hiute oder morgen” ‘today or tomorrow’ (2313), and “in vil kurzen tagen” ‘within a few short days’ (2318) attest to Laudine’s pressing need.

This urgency dissipates, however—at least from Iwein’s and Gawein’s perspectives; as soon as Iwein’s supremacy in Laudine’s land is established. Gawein’s concern is with Iwein’s honor: “Ir hât des iuch genüegen sol: / dar under lêr ich iuch wol / iuwer êre bewarn” (2799-801).¹¹⁹ He turns the necessity of residence from protecting the land to providing corn for the household, stating that, although this often necessitates one’s presence at home, a knight also needs to prove from time to time that he has not given up tourneying (2823-58). Furthermore, Gawein maintains that a virtuous woman would rather her husband engaged in tournaments to maintain his honor: “wan ist ir von herzen leit / sîn unwirde und sîn verlegenheit” (2869-70).¹²⁰ Now that Iwein has won land and lady, Gawein advises him to entrust the land and its people to her (2884-89). He makes no mention of the necessity of a man to protect the fountain or the land. In fact, he finally switches the necessity of Iwein’s presence from protecting the land to keeping an eye on Laudine, which he deems is unnecessary: “ein wîp die man hât erkant / in alsô stætem muote, / diun bedarf niht mêre huote / niuwan ir selber êren” (2890-93).¹²¹ Laudine still

such that I could lose my land today or tomorrow. Therefore, I must find a man who will protect it. . . . Within a few short days, I must find a husband or lose my land.”

¹¹⁹ ‘You have everything you need; but let me teach you how to maintain your honor.’

¹²⁰ ““because it causes her heartfelt suffering if he shows himself to be unworthy and indulges too much in sleeping with his wife.””

¹²¹ ““A woman whom one has known to be loyal does not need any other form of surveillance than her own honor.”” See above, p. 63, fn. 76.

maintains at this juncture that protecting the land is of paramount importance (2935-39). Iwein's protection becomes superfluous, however, by the time he returns from tourneying over a year later; Lunete states: "sî wil ouch âne iuch genesen" 'She will prosper just as well without you' (3192).

Iwein loses honor through a lack of *mâze* in his pursuit of violence; he fails to return at the appointed time because of his pursuit of tournaments. Lunete informs Iwein that, in not returning within the year, he has forfeited his honor:

"doch sulent ir in allen
deste wirs gevallen
die triuwe und êre minnent
und sich des versinnent
daz nimmer ein wol vrumer man
âne triuwe werden kan." (3175-81)¹²²

A knight might have used violence to achieve what Lunete achieves with words, namely: "der slac sîner êren" 'the destruction of his [Iwein's] honor' (3204). Although Lunete's words are not the reason that Iwein loses honor, her words are the means by which Iwein is publicly disgraced. A similar situation occurs in *Parzival* when Cundry publicly shames the eponymous hero, claiming that even King Arthur and the entire Round Table are dishonored by his presence (314.1-317.4).¹²³ Lunete attributes Iwein's loss of honor to disloyalty, but the narrator comments: "in hete sîn selbes swert erslagen" 'He was struck by his own sword' (3224). In a

¹²² "“But you will have the disdain of all who value loyalty and honor and of those who remember that no one can be highly regarded who has no loyalty.””

¹²³ For more on this episode, see the chapter on *Parzival*.

similar play between violence and the power of women in spite of their weakness to conquer male strength, the narrator states:

swie manhaft er doch wære
und swie unwandelbære
an lîbe und an sinne,
doch meistert vrou Minne
daz im ein krankes wîp
verkêrte sinne unde lîp.
der ie ein rehter adamas
rîterlîcher tugende was,
der lief nû harte balde
ein tôre in dem walde. (3251-60).¹²⁴

Iwein gains honor throughout his year of tournaments, but both his honor and his sanity vanish when Laudine rejects him.

Iwein's previous loss of honor does not prohibit him from achieving honor in the battle against Aliers. The passage narrating the battle between the lady's knights (including Iwein) and Aliers's is unabashedly violent:

die der vluht vergâzen

¹²⁴ 'As brave as he was and as unchangeable as his body and mind were, nonetheless Lady Love brought it about that a weak woman transformed his mind and body. He who had always been a true representative of knightly virtue ran now as a lunatic into the forest.' The actual translation of *adamas* is 'precious stone' or 'diamond' (Lexer). The narrator uses this term metaphorically, as one might refer to someone as: "a diamond among men."

die wurden âne zagen
 alle meisteil erslagen
 und die andern gefangen. (3744-47)¹²⁵

The violent encounter increases Iwein's honor: "hie was der strît ergangen / nâch hern Îweines êren" (3748-49).¹²⁶

Praise in Middle High German Arthurian romances is not confined to the victor of a battle. In the battle alluded to above, the narrator praises Aliers for maintaining a small band of fighters right up until the end:

dannoch entwelter zer wer
 mit einer lützel kraft,
 und tete selhe rîterschaft
 die niemen gevelschen mohte. (3762-65)¹²⁷

The narrator's praise of the villain Aliers is not unique; the sentiments expressed here can be found in a number of instances with respect to those warriors/knights who are defeated in combat, such as Rüdiger in the *Nibelungenlied*. The manner in which these individuals comport themselves in battle earns the respect and praise of their adversaries (and the narrator); their valor is more important than whether they emerge as victors.

¹²⁵ 'Those who did not flee were for the most part slain without hesitation; the others were taken prisoner.'

¹²⁶ 'Herewith the fight ended to Sir Iwein's honor.'

¹²⁷ 'Afterward he maintained a resistance with a small band of men, showing thereby knightly conduct that cannot be denied.'

7. Violence against the self

The narrator's description of Laudine's suffering could serve to exemplify the agony that any lady in the Middle High German Arthurian legends endures upon the death of her beloved knight:

von jâmer sî vürder brach
ir hâr und diu cleider.
ezn dorfte nie wîbe leider
ze dirre werlte geschehen:
wand sî muose tôten sehen
einen den liebsten man,
den wîp ze liebe gewan. (1310-16)¹²⁸

The hyperbolic claim that no one could have suffered as much as she did is meant to convey the agonizing extent of Laudine's suffering. These words reflect her pain as if the narrator conveyed her perspective, but they could be applied to many women who endured, and sometimes even succumbed to, similar circumstances in the Arthurian legends, such as Enite in Hartmann's earlier work (*Erec* 5739-63), the nameless woman whose husband has been stolen by giants in the same narrative (5320-34),¹²⁹ or Japhite in Wirnt's romance (*Wigalois* 7673-44).¹³⁰

¹²⁸ 'In her wretchedness she tore her hair and her clothes. No woman in the world can have suffered as much as she did, because she had to see one of the most beloved husbands that a woman had ever loved dead.'

¹²⁹ For more information on these episodes, see the chapter on *Erec*.

¹³⁰ For more information on this episode, see the chapter on *Wigalois*.

Laudine's violence against her own person is a reflection of her love and loyalty to her dead husband. Not only does she tussle her hair and tear her clothes (1476-77), but she also voices her own death wish:

“der tôt möhte an mir wol hie
büezen swaz er ie getete,
und gewerte mich einer bête,
daz er mich lieze varn mit dir.” (1462-65)¹³¹

She regrets that she was ever born (1469). Iwein grieves that the lady does herself violence and longs to take her pain upon himself (1671-80). His desire to stop her hands from inflicting violence on herself is so great that he forgets his own danger and would have run in among his enemies if the maiden Lunete had not stopped him (1476-95).

Iwein provides evidence that violence against the self need not involve human creatures; in this case it is a lion that expresses loyalty at the death of a beloved knight. Hartmann returns to the suicide motif that he introduced in *Erec*, when Enite believes that Erec has perished (6042-114). Shortly after Iwein rescues a lion from a fight with a dragon, he wanders unwittingly into Laudine's land, followed by the grateful lion (3828-82, 3903-05). When Iwein realizes that his remembrances of his former life and of his wife's rejection are true, rather than a dream, he tumbles off his horse, inadvertently falling on the blade of his own sword (3505-62, 3930-49). The loyal lion, believing that Iwein is dead, prepares to kill himself with Iwein's sword (3953-54). This scene does not contain the lengthy soliloquy that Enite engages in as she prepares to use Erec's sword to kill herself. Through this glimpse into the lion's thoughts,

¹³¹ ““Death may do as he wishes with me, and, if he would grant me a boon, he would let me go with you.””

provided by the narrator and through the lion's actions (3950-52), the reader sees the level of the latter's devotion to Iwein. In case the point has been missed in the lion's actions, Iwein interprets the lion's behavior:

“dirre lewe wilde,
daz er von herzeleide sich
wolde erstechen umbe mich,
daz rehtiu triuwe nâhen gât.” (4002-05)¹³²

The lion's loyalty shows the same level of devotion as that of a lady for her knight. One woman, whose husband has been stolen by giants, tears and scratches herself into unconsciousness (*Erec* 5320–34). Belearé beats her breast until it is black (*Wigalois* 4889-97). The devotion expressed by both Enite and the lion in their readiness to take their own lives, however, is akin to that of Japhite in *Wigalois*, who dies of grief after her husband's death (7737-44), or Liamere who becomes insane before likewise succumbing (10002-09, 10214-18). Both Japhite and Liamere lose the will to live, as do Enite and the lion. Whereas, for the former examples, grief is enough to rob them of life, Enite and the lion must take it by violent force. Fortunately for the lion, Iwein saves his life a second time: “er rihte sich ûf und saz / unde erwante dem lewen daz / daz er sich niht ze tôte stach” (3957-59).¹³³ This act of near-violence – the lion's unfulfilled suicide attempt – serves the purpose of establishing the lion's loyalty to Iwein for the remainder of the narrative.

¹³² ““This wild lion, who from heartfelt suffering wanted to stab himself to death because of me in order to show how far loyalty goes.””

¹³³ ‘He sat up and hindered the lion from stabbing himself to death’

Unlike a lady's grief at the loss of a beloved knight, Iwein's grief, and violence against himself, at the loss of Laudine is entirely verbal. He contemplates following the lion's example and taking his own life: "sît ich mirz selbe hân getân, / ich solts ouch selbe buoze enpfân" (3999-4000),¹³⁴ but he becomes distracted before the idea can develop into the deed (4001-22). In threatening violence to an imaginary adversary, Iwein expresses the desire to lash out and take vengeance for his loss:

"nû wie hâstû verlorn
dîner vrouwen hulde!
jane wær diu selbe schulde
zer werlte niemans wan dîn,
ezn müese sîn ende sîn." (3964-68)¹³⁵

The question immediately arises why Iwein withholds from himself the punishment he would mete out to someone else, but this does not occur to him until after a monologue, in which he complains of his misfortune (3969-93). It is at this point that the question of vengeance against the self occurs to him: "war umbe spar ich den lîp?" (3994). Iwein's words express violence against the self:

"mîn lîp wære des wol wert
daz mich mîn selbes swert
zehant hie an im ræche,
und ez durch in stæche." (3995-98)¹³⁶

¹³⁴ 'Since it was my own fault, I am the one who should be punished for it.'

¹³⁵ "'Now how have you lost your lady's favor! If someone else besides you were at fault for this, he would have to forfeit his life.'"

It takes Iwein only a brief period to make the leap from contemplating killing a hypothetical individual to considering suicide for the same crime. Iwein delays fulfilling this plan when he learns of Lunete's dire circumstances (4045-71), but, in the act of promising to deliver her, he shows that he still plans to do away with himself:

“sît diu selbe schulde
niemannes ist wan mîn,
der schade sol auch mîn eines sîn:
ichn weiz wem ich sî mêre gebe.
jane müet mich niht wan daz ich lebe:
ouch sol ich schiere tôt geligen.
deiswâr ich trûwe wol gesigen
an den rîtern alle drîn,
die iuch geworfen hânt her in:
und swenn ich iuch erlœset hân,
sô sol ich mich selben slân.” (4218-28)¹³⁷

The idea of punishment is uppermost in Iwein's mind; the above excerpt begins and ends with it. In fact, the beginning and end of the passage parallel one another; he begins with the logical

¹³⁶ ““My life is certainly worthy of having my own sword avenge me and pierce me through.””

¹³⁷ ““Since no one is to blame but me, the punishment should be mine as well; I don't know to whom I would give it otherwise. Nothing afflicts me other than that I am still alive. I will soon be dead. I will truly defeat the three knights who have thrown you into this imprisonment, and when I have delivered you, I will kill myself.””

statement that he is to blame, therefore, he will punish himself; he ends with the idea of deflecting the punishment from Lunete to himself. It is clear that he believes someone must pay violently for this crime¹³⁸ and that individual must be himself. By defeating her three accusers, Iwein intends to use violent means to redirect violence – that is, punishment for the crime – from Lunete to himself. He continues by reiterating his plan to kill himself, adding that the deed must be accomplished in Laudine’s presence (4229-46).

A death wish need not develop into a plan or an attempt to commit suicide as it does with Iwein the and lion, respectively. The *wirt* ‘lord of the castle,’ whose daughter the giant Harpin demands, wishes for his own death, so that he must no longer witness the loss of his lands, the deaths of his sons, or the theft of his daughter (4470-89): “got welle niht daz ichz gelebe / und sende mir hînaht den tô” (4490-91)¹³⁹ The *wirt*’s language still constitutes self-inflicted violence, even though he never voices an intention to carry out his death-wish.

8. Iwein’s second promise to return

Iwein’s promise to fight Lunete’s three accusers on the following day constitutes his second promise to return on time; the first was his broken promise to Laudine. He also promises the *wirt* that he will fight the giant in the morning under the condition that he can still fulfill his promise to Lunete at midday (4748-56). This conditional point is so important that he repeats it:

“kumt er uns ze vruo ze selher zît,

¹³⁸ The nature of the crime is slightly different for Lunete than it is for Iwein. Lunete’s crime has been twisted into treason with the idea that she willfully encouraged Laudine to marry someone who would betray her trust (4119-26). The crime of which Iwein laments is that of losing his lady’s favor (3962-65).

¹³⁹ ““God forbid that I should live through that, and let me die tonight.””

swenne sich endet der strît,
 daz ich umbe mitten tac
 ir ze helfe komen mac
 der ichz ê gelobet hân,
 sô wil ich in durch iuch bestân.” (4797-800)¹⁴⁰

Unfortunately, and in spite of his conditions, Iwein finds himself over-scheduled on the following day, and realizes that he will lose honor if he fails to aid either the *wirt* or Lunete (4829-34).

According to Schultz, *Iwein* is divisible into a bipartite structure, separated by Gawein’s advice to Iwein to go away with him for a year (132). The first part extends from the festival at King Arthur’s court to Iwein’s marriage to Laudine. The second part extends from Gawein’s advice to Iwein to the end of the romance when Iwein and Laudine are reconciled. There is another structural layer, however, related to that suggested by Schultz: the structure resulting first, from Iwein’s failure to keep his promise to Laudine, and second, from his insistence on keeping his promise to Lunete. Gawein’s encouragement to Iwein to go away for a year to fight in tournaments is only the means by which an imperfection in Iwein’s character becomes evident: a lack of *mâze*. Iwein’s debate over whether he should stay to fight the giant is the point at which it becomes evident that Iwein has gained a sense of *mâze*.

Although Iwein decides he cannot wait any longer for the giant, (“ez ist zît daz ich rîte” ‘It is time that I left’ [4834]), he vacillates in his decision to leave when the *wirt*, his court, his

¹⁴⁰ ““If the giant comes early and the fight ends in time, so that at midday I can come to the (lady’s) aid as I promised, then I will oppose him for you.””

daughter, and his wife all beg him in the name of God and for the sake of Gawein to remain (4846-65). Iwein begins to weigh the matter carefully:

Des wart sîn muot zwîfelhaft.
 er gedâhte: “ich bedarf wol meisterschaft,
 sol ich daz wægest ersehen.
 mir ist ze spilne geschehen
 ein gâch geteiltez spil:
 ezn giltet lützel noch vil,
 niuwan al mîn êre.” (4869-75)¹⁴¹

Iwein debates for forty-three lines about what he should do (4870-913). It is undoubtedly significant that, within this debate, he prays to God to help him make the right decision. There is no evidence earlier in the narrative that he sought God’s wisdom concerning the time when it was appropriate to return to Laudine during his year of tourneying. Just as Erec renews his obeisance to God after he has learned *mâze* (*Erec* 8632-44), so, too, does Iwein turn to God in his need to do justice both toward Lunete and toward the *wirt*. Iwein’s prayer is answered, for the weight of the decision is removed when the giant, Harpin, suddenly appears, allowing him to deliver the *wirt*’s sons and return to Lunete on time (4914-16, 5085-92, 5145-50).

9. Otherworldly creatures

There is little that could be more shameful for a knight than being beaten by a dwarf,¹⁴² but, in the case of the sons of the *wirt*, the giant manages to augment their humiliation:

¹⁴¹ ‘At this, he began to doubt himself. He thought: “I am in great need of instruction if I am to decide rightly. I have been dealt a double game. It is not a matter of less or more honor, but of all my honor.”’

an den het er begangen
 grôze unhövescheit.
 in wâren aller hande cleit
 ze den zîten vremde,
 niuwan diu bæsten hemde
 diu ie küchenkneht getruoc.
 sî treip ein getwerc, daz sî sluoc
 mit sîner geiselruoten
 daz sî über bluoten.
 die herren rîten ungeschuoch:
 ir hemde was ein sactuoch,
 gezerret, swarz, unde grôz:
 die edelen rîter wâren blôz
 an beinen unde an armen.

 ir pfärit wâren, diu sî riten,
 tôtmager und vil kranc:
 ir ietwederz strûchte und hanc.
 die vüeze wâren in unden
 zesamene gebunden
 und die hende vaste

¹⁴² This motif also occurs in *Erec* (95-108).

ze rüke mit baste. (4918-40)¹⁴³

Harpin, has already murdered two of the *wirt*'s sons (4477-811). Now, the giant employs further emotional violence against the *wirt* by humiliating and torturing his remaining sons, i.e., by engaging in physical violence against them, and threatening to kill them. Everything in the passage above is meant to shame the *wirt*'s sons, from their coarse shirts, to beating them with rods, to forcing them to ride starving horses. The giant does not grant them the dignity of appointing knights to guard them, but puts them in the hands of a dwarf. The *wirt*'s sons are all knights, but the giant has robbed them of their power to defend themselves, their family, or their father's land. This in turn causes the *wirt* great anguish and shame; he is likewise unable to protect his family or his land, and laments: "ich lîde laster unde nôt" 'I suffer shame and affliction' (4460). After the above lengthy description of the knights' humiliating state, the narrator pities the *wirt*, who must look upon his sons: "daz im sîn herze niene brach / von jâmer, des wundert mich: / wandez was wol jâmerlich" (4948-50).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ 'He acted with great uncourtliness toward them. All their clothes had been taken from them. They were dressed in nothing but the roughest shirts that kitchen laborer ever wore. A dwarf drove them, beating them with a rod, so that they bled profusely. The lords rode barefoot. Their shirts were of sackcloth: torn, black, and coarse. The legs and arms of the noble knights were naked. . . . The horses that they rode were starving and very weak: all of them stumbled or halted. Their (the knights') feet were tight together beneath them and their hands were tied tightly behind their backs with blast.'

¹⁴⁴ 'I am amazed that his heart did not break in heartfelt suffering because it (the sight) was wretched.'

Iwein engages in justified violence against the giant (5025-72). As with Erec's second encounter with Guivreiz (*Erec* 6879-86), part of Iwein's motivation for wanting to fight the giant is fear of being taken for a coward (*Iwein* 4911-13), yet knightly violence against the giant is justified because of the giant's unprovoked violence against the *wirt* and his family. As her father, the *wirt* has every right to refuse to give his daughter in marriage. The giant's refusal to respect his decision and the violence in which he engages against him, justify the *wirt*'s engaging in violence to defend himself, or in asking Iwein to engage in such violence for him.

The motif of the unavoidable challenge occurs in the episode in which two giants hold three hundred ladies prisoner. As soon as a lady on the way to the fortress warns Iwein of the danger (6125-38), he is bound to pursue whatever adventure lies within, regardless of the consequences. The lady advises Iwein to act in a manner completely inconsistent with that of a brave knight:

“ich weiz wol, sult ir volvarn,
daz ez iu an den lîp gât.
erwindet noch, daz ist mîn rât,
unde rîtet vûrbaz.” (6150-53)¹⁴⁵

The lady's advice is full of solicitude for Iwein's well-being and for that of the lady who accompanies him. Her concern for his welfare is also contradictory, however; if he followed her advice he would forfeit his honor, since no brave knight would behave as a coward by fleeing from danger. Yet the lady claims that it is precisely the likely loss of Iwein's honor that causes the people in the market to behave rudely to them: “sî riuwet iuwer êre” ‘They grieve for your

¹⁴⁵ “I know that if you reach your goal that it will mean your death. Turn around – that is my advice – and ride farther.”

honor' (6134). The people believe that Iwein will lose both life and honor if he enters the fortress (6134-42). The gatekeeper welcomes Iwein, but his hearty greeting sours into a warning:

“wol her, rîter, wol her!
wand ich iuch des zewâre gewer
daz man iuch hie vil gerne siht:
ezn hilfet iuch aber niht.” (6167-70)¹⁴⁶

Such warnings can only have the effect of inciting a brave knight of Iwein's caliber to violent action against the very danger of which he is warned.¹⁴⁷ The text states that the doorman greets him with many threats, but that Iwein ignores these threats when he sees no danger (6174-85). It is, however, self evident that, as a superlative knight, he would have confronted whatever danger there was, regardless of anyone's threats and/or warnings.

Throughout the Arthurian romances, giants use their size and strength in circumstances of inequality. They are the source of inhuman treatment of individuals weaker than themselves – often women as in the case of the maiden that two giants abduct from King Arthur's court in *Wigalois* (2064-82). In *Iwein* two giants hold three hundred women prisoner in pitiable circumstances (6190-93). These two giants exhibit their preference for an unfair advantage even

¹⁴⁶ ““Yes, knight, ride this way! I tell you truly that we are heartily glad to see you here, but it won't help you.””

¹⁴⁷ A similar situation occurs in the *Nibelungenlied* when Siegfried's father, Siegmund, warns his son of the danger of pursuing the beautiful Kriemhild in Worms (52-55). Siegmund's warnings do nothing to discourage Siegfried.

in battle. When faced with the prospect of fighting Iwein, the two giants refuse to face both him and the lion:

“jane vihtet iu hie niemen mite,
 der lewe enwerde in getân.
 sold er uns mit iu bestân,
 sô wæren zwêne wider zwein.” (6696-99)¹⁴⁸

The only circumstance these giants recognize as fair is the unfair constellation of two against one – two giants against one knight. When the lion is restrained, the narrator utters a prayer for Iwein because of the unfairness of the fight (6713-20). As with the case of Lunete’s three accusers, however, the lion breaks out of his restraint when he sees Iwein in danger (6737-51). When the lion attacks, the narrator is blatantly biased on the side of the lion; he refers to the lion’s opponent as: “des tiuvels kneht” ‘a demon’s servant’ (6772) and attributes the lion’s success to God’s intervention (6774).

10. Violence against women

In the case of the *wirt* who asks Iwein to fight for him, the giant’s motivation for violence from first to last is revenge for the *wirt*’s refusal to give him his daughter (4470-73). It is also evident, however, that he intends by means of violence to coerce the *wirt* into complying with the demand for his daughter:

“er giht (daz ist mîn meistiu nôt),
 swenn er mirs an beherte
 mit selhem ungeverte,

¹⁴⁸ ““No one will fight with you unless this lion is locked away. If he were to fight with you against us, that would be two against two.””

sô weller ir ze wîbe haben rât,
 und dem bæsten garzun den er hât
 deme welle er sî geben.” (4492-97)¹⁴⁹

The *wirt*’s words in the above passage show that the giant, the personification of uncourtly behavior, is prepared to use force to get what he wants, but that, because the *wirt* did not instantly give him what he demanded, he will avenge himself on the daughter. Later, the giant states that he will hang the *wirt*’s last four sons if he does not hand over his daughter (4951-55). The giant uses both physical violence and threats – a form of verbal violence – to try to get his way.

In the midst of the violence against the *wirt* and his sons, the daughter exists in the narrative without a voice; she is a piece of property to be disposed of at will. The text relates very little about her other than that she is still young (4470). The only time in the narrative that the daughter expresses her opinion is after Iwein tells the *wirt* that he cannot wait for the giant anymore, but the reader is left to imagine her words; the narrator relates only their gist:

des wurden harte riuwevar
 der wirt und daz gesinde,
 diu vrouwe mit ir kinde.
 ez wart vil dicke von in zwein
 sîn bester vriunt her Gâwein
 an der bete genant
 unde er bî im gemant;

¹⁴⁹ ““He says (and this is my greatest affliction), that, if he has to get her from me by force, he will decide not to marry her, but to give her instead to the lowest servant he has.””

und manten in sô verre,
 daz got unser herre
 im sælde und êre bære
 der erbarmherze wære:
 erbarmet er sich über sî,
 dâ stüende gotes lôn bî. (4846-58)¹⁵⁰

Although it is impossible to ascertain how much of the pleading the mother does rather than the daughter, it is obvious that the daughter does not want to marry the giant. The agonies that a maiden suffers who is abducted by giants are narrated in *Wigalois* (2064-79).

Lunete is another lady who suffers violence in *Iwein*. The violence that Lunete suffers for betraying her queen is related on pages 13-15 of this chapter. The reason she cannot find Gawein, however, has to do with violence against another lady: Queen Ginover. The abduction of Ginover evinces how highly knights esteemed honor. In this case, King Arthur esteems honor above the welfare of the queen. Arthur promises to grant the knight Meljakanz's request: "ist daz ir betelîchen gert" 'as long as what you ask for is fitting' (4546). The knight, immediately insulted, states that Arthur's reputation for generosity is false, since he places conditions upon granting his request (4547-65). When the Knights of the Round Table advise Arthur that he has mishandled the situation (4566-78), Arthur realizes that his honor is at stake; the offended knight

¹⁵⁰ 'At this they became pale with sadness – the lord of the castle and his household, the lady and her daughter. As they pleaded with him, these two often named his best friend, Sir Gawein, and urged him on his behalf, and urged him strongly that God our Lord would bless him and give him honor if he were merciful to them. If he (Iwein) would show them mercy, God would reward him.'

will spread a bad report about him and sully his reputation. Arthur, whose word is like an oath, promises to fulfill Meljakanz's request, but is angry when the knight requests permission to take Ginover away with him (4579-92). He cannot go back on his word, however, as that, too, would destroy his honor, so he brings Ginover forward (4608-10). It is at this point, with the evidence of Ginover's behavior, that the weight of honor becomes truly apparent:

und dô sî schiet von dan,
 dô sach sî jâmerlîchen an
 alle die dâ wâren,
 und begunde gebâren
 als ein wîp diu sêre
 sorget umb ir êre,
 unde mantes als sî kunde
 mit gebærde und mit munde,
 daz man sî ledeget enzît. (4611-19)¹⁵¹

Like the daughter of the nameless *wirt*,¹⁵² Ginover is a woman and, therefore, a piece of property. Be that as it may, Ginover realizes as much as Arthur does that an unfulfilled promise would dismantle Arthur's illustrious reputation. She does not ask Arthur or anyone else to allow her to remain at home. In spite of the fact that she is worried about her *êre*, which must be understood in this context as "chastity," she has no choice but to allow herself to be taken away

¹⁵¹ 'And as they rode away, she looked miserably at all who were there, as a woman who was very concerned about her honor, and began to plead with them as well as she could with gesticulations and speech to rescue her quickly.'

¹⁵² See pp. 120-21 above.

by the strange knight. The maintenance of King Arthur's honor overrides even the queen's safety.

It is unclear why the knight wanted to abduct the queen in the first place unless it is for the opportunity to prove that he can best all the Knights of the Round Table, because, before making off with the queen, he reassures the king that he will not ride any faster than usual:

Dô in der rîter zürnen sach,
 dô trôst er in unde sprach:
 “herre, habent guote site,
 wand ich ir anders niene bite
 niuwan mit dem gedinge,
 ob ich sî hinnen bringe;
 ir habet der besten ein her:
 ob ich sî allen den erwer
 die mir durch sî rîtent nâch.
 ouch ensol mir niht wesen gâch,
 niuwan als alle mîne tage;
 und wizze wol swer mich jage
 daz ich sîn wol erbîte
 und niemer gerîte
 deste drâter umb ein hâr.” (4593-607).¹⁵³

¹⁵³ ‘When the knight saw the king enraged, he comforted him and said: “Sir, compose yourself. because I only make my request under the condition that I am able to take her away (and you have the best army), and that I can defend myself against all those who pursue me

The knight's determination to wait for any knight who pursues him would be inexplicable unless his goal is to fight him rather than to abduct the queen. His attempt to comfort the king may suggest that he thinks of it as a kind of game; he does not know whether he will be successful in abducting the queen and in defeating all of Arthur's knights. Keie is the first to challenge the villain as Arthur's knights hurry after him (4634-68). Kalogrenant attacks next, followed by Dodines, Segremors, Henete, Pliopleherin, Millemargot, Iders, and others whom the narrator does not name (4683-715). Unfortunately, Gawein is away at the time, but he returns and chases after Meljakanz and Ginover the next day (4717-26). It is only later, during the fight between two women over an inheritance, that we learn that Gawein must have been successful in returning the queen to Arthur (5678-81).

As evinced by the unfortunate ladies from the Island of Virgins, violence against women is not limited in *Iwein* to individual ladies. Each year the lord of the Island of Virgins sends thirty maidens to two giants as payment for sparing his life (6355-68). The result is that, when Iwein visits the fortress, he sees at least three hundred women laboring without wages in miserable circumstances of abject poverty and near starvation (6190-220, 6377-85). In order to deliver them, Iwein must defeat the two giants who originally made the bargain with the lord of the Island of Virgins.

because of her. Also, I will not be in any more of a hurry than I am on any other day. And know well that I will wait for anyone who chases after me and will not ride any faster even by a hair.” According to Lexer, the word *gedinge* should be translated “gedanke, hoffnung” ‘thought, hope,’ but the online “Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch” von Benecke, Müller, Zarncke cites this context specifically as meaning “bedingung” ‘condition.’

It is probable that Iwein would have undertaken to deliver these unfortunate women even without any encouragement, but the lord of the castle insists that none of the knights who visit him is allowed to leave without first engaging two giants in combat in order to win his daughter's hand in marriage (6592-605). Iwein immediately claims both his unworthiness to marry the man's daughter and his fear of engaging in battle against two giants (6622-38). It is true that Iwein has no desire to marry the man's daughter (6879-811), but there is probably another reason that he denigrates himself as unworthy and cowardly: the man simply did not ask him to fight the giants. The host's introduction of the theme of fighting the giants contains an imperative that immediately afterward becomes direct: "nû vehtent: daz ist alsô guot: / wanz ensî daz diu wer iuch ner, / sî slahtent iuch âne wer" (6644-46).¹⁵⁴ If the man had tried to dissuade Iwein from fighting the two giants, he undoubtedly would have insisted upon it. Contrary to the history of vassalage, however, knights of Arthurian romance were not to be enslaved to others' demands.

11. Violence by women

Laudine is the first of the women in *Iwein* from whom some form of violence stems. The violence associated with Laudine is always indirect; she does not carry out violence herself, but others carry it out for her. In the case of the fountain, her husband – first King Ascalon and then Iwein – carries out her will in opposing those who pour water on the rock. Others carry out Laudine's will in punishing Lunete for her supposed crime, and others turn on her accusers to burn them at the stake when Iwein proves Lunete's innocence.

¹⁵⁴ “Now, fight: that is good, because they will slay you even without a fight if you cannot defend yourself.”

The text states that the elder daughter of the Count of the Black Thorn acted “mit gewalte” ‘with violence’ (5636) toward the younger in order to separate her from her part of the inheritance (5635-38).¹⁵⁵ Like Lunete, who offered to find a champion to prove her innocence, the younger daughter challenges her sister by declaring her intention to find a champion to battle her cause:

wil dû mich mînes guotes
und mîner êren behern.
des wil ich mich mit kampfē wern.
ichn vihte niht, ich bin ein wîp:
daz als unwerhaft ist mîn lîp,
dâne hâstû niht an:
deiswâr ich vinde wol den man
der mir durch sîne hovescheit
die gnâde niemer widerseit
ern beschirme mich vor dir. (5646-55)¹⁵⁶

The younger daughter acknowledges her inability to fight for her own cause, but, again like Lunete, hopes to find someone at King Arthur’s court who will fight for her. She attempts to make use of the courtly system of violence for the sake of justice. This system of obtaining

¹⁵⁵ The nature of this violence, whether physical or emotional, is not stated.

¹⁵⁶ ““If you intend to rob me of my worldly goods and my honor, I will defend myself in battle. I will not fight, because I am a woman, but you will not gain anything from my defenselessness. Indeed, I will find a man who is so courtly that he never denies an act of mercy. He will protect me from you.””

justice works against her, however, because she shares her plans with her sister of obtaining a champion from King Arthur's court (5659-62). The older sister hurries to Arthur's castle ahead of her and obtains Gawain's services as a champion – the same champion the younger sister had intended to obtain (5663-69). Although the text describes the elder sister's actions in terms of "gewalt" (5636, 6021), this word hardly refers to a physical act of violence. Denying the younger sister her share of the inheritance constitutes *gewalt* whether or not physical violence is used. The fact that the elder sister uses her knowledge of her sister's plans, and thus, of the younger sister's youth and innocence, against her is also a form of *gewalt* (5671-72); it is a force against which the younger sister is not knowledgeable enough to defend herself. The only defense of which the younger sister is knowledgeable is the courtly system of obtaining justice through a champion that she attempts to set in motion with Gawain's aid (5703-14). This is the same system that her older sister works to subvert – a fact that displays the elder sister's actions as a form of *gewalt*; the older sister's scheming is a form of unjustified violence against the younger.

The elder sister's uncourtly behavior toward the younger continues with the elder sister's misuse of the form of *gewalt* that was obtainable for a woman. The elder sister has obtained Gawain's promise that he will fight on her behalf, and she, therefore, persists in her obstinate refusal to divide the inheritance with her sister (5737-41). In spite of the custom of waiting forty days after an accusation before the judicial battle is allowed to occur, the elder sister insists that the fight should take place immediately, so that she might deny her sister the opportunity to find an opponent for Gawain (5742-48). This becomes obvious when she only concedes the point because she believes her sister will be unable to find a champion: "ob sî ir noch ein jâr bite" 'even if she had an entire year [to look]' (5754).

The *gewalt* of the elder sister toward the younger takes on various forms in the narrative. At first, the elder sister threatens to withhold her sibling's rightful inheritance. It is also to be assumed that the elder sister had the power to withhold the inheritance, since the younger sister takes such pains to oppose her in this plan. Denying the younger sister the wherewithal that is rightfully hers is physical enough, but the *gewalt* of the elder sister toward the younger takes its direct and immediate physical toll when the younger sister sets out on her search for the knight with the lion; the journey is so toilsome that she falls ill and cannot continue (5761-72, 6038-46). Even though it is the knights who will fight, and not the ladies, the narrator states that it is the younger sister who will suffer *gewalt* if she does not find a champion who can defeat Gawein (6027-34).

12. The battle between friends

The unwitting battle between two friends is a familiar motif in the Arthurian legends. It occurs in *Erec* between the hero and Guivreiz (6898-907). It occurs between Parzival and Gawan when both think the knight opposing them is Gramoflanz, whom each has come to fight (*Parzival* 688.5-690.2). In *Iwein*, Gawein fights anonymously for the older sister who has wronged the younger (5673-77). Iwein's incognito status as the knight, "der den lewen mit im hât" 'who has the lion' (5727) results in a battle between him and his best friend, Gawein, because Iwein has agreed to fight for the younger sister (5725-28, 6067-70). To make matters still murkier, Iwein has left his lion behind (6902-04), with the result that Gawein also fails to realize that this is the knight who conquered the giant Harpin for his sake (5103-26).

The narrator has placed Gawein at a disadvantage in this instance because he is fighting for the elder sister whom all believe to be in the wrong; even King Arthur, at the urging of his entourage, attempts to persuade her to deal fairly with her sister (6895-921). Under the premise

that God always stands on the side of truth (5275), Gawein should have lost the battle. As with other instances in which friends joust against each other,¹⁵⁷ the narrator cleverly interrupts the fight before the outcome can be determined (7351-487).

13. The fountain motif

Violence, whether intentional or otherwise, is not always directed against humans; besides acting with violence toward the knight of the fountain (711-19), Kalogrenant's act in pouring water on the stone above the fountain results in violence against the forest (638-62) and the animals living there (663-65). *Iwein* proves with its fountain motif that a mysterious object with strange consequences for anyone who dares to employ its ritualistic trigger is as enticing to a brave knight as a challenge from a fellow warrior. It is particularly appropriate that this fountain should prove to be an alluring object, because the fountain is symbolic of femininity. The narrator of the Song of Songs refers to his beloved as "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed (4.12) and a few verses later as: "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon" (4.15). The fountain with its emerald held up by four marble animals, of which the wild man in the forest originally tells Kalogrenant (550-97, 623), is the initial catalyst that drives the rest of the narrative. Kalogrenant immediately wends his way to the fountain upon receiving directions how to get there (598-602). His failure to defeat the fountain's protector inspires Iwein to take up the challenge (768-72, 803-09). Iwein's success in defeating King Ascalon leads Laudine to seek another protector of the fountain (1824-30). This motivation

¹⁵⁷ See the preceding references in *Erec* and *Parzival* in the paragraph above, as well as the fight between Parzival and his brother Feirefiz (*Parzival* 737.22-748.12). Although Parzival and Feirefiz have never met before, their kinship would have brought guilt on the victor had the one slain the other.

receives further impetus from the approach of King Arthur and his men, who plan to take over the fountain (1836-41). It is only after Iwein knocks Keie from his horse that the symbol of the fountain is no longer the motivating factor behind the action in the rest of the narrative (2580-86, 2646-48). The fountain remains, however, the factor that originally drove Iwein and Laudine together; without the fountain as catalyst, Iwein would have had no opportunity to evince his lack of *mâze*, and thus, continue the narrative with the journey motif that teaches him complete virtue. It is also the sight of the fountain that causes Iwein's sense of identity to return after he is cured from insanity (3923-35).

It is unlikely, however, that the fountain itself is the force behind the storm that terrorizes first Kalogrenant and then Iwein (638-72, 989-98). Cormeau and Strömer postulate Laudine as a “verführerische Fee, die ungebetene Eingriffe in ihren Bereich durch Naturerscheinungen ahndet” (198).¹⁵⁸ Yet, when Iwein steals away from King Arthur's court a second time to pour water on the well's emerald, the text suggests that the inhabitants of the land, including Laudine, have no control over the elements that appear to unleash their wrath when the fountain is disturbed (7805-39). Laudine does not release the storm; she is a victim of it, which is why she asks Lunete for advice on how to remedy the situation (7844-67). If we look at it from another perspective, however, it becomes clear why the fountain is a symbol of femininity: The knights who approach the fountain and pour water on the stone can be viewed as unsolicited male attention; Laudine needs a knight to protect her, the fountain, in order to ward off the (sexual) attentions of other knights. Laudine has no control over who comes to the fountain and Lunete warns her: “diz geschiht iu aber morgen” ‘This will happen to you again tomorrow’ (7839).

¹⁵⁸ ‘alluring fairy, who avenges uninvited encroachment into her territory with natural phenomena.’

From this perspective, the storm becomes the female's inner turmoil when a man approaches her against her will. The knight who protects the fountain becomes the man who defends the woman against such undesirable male encroachment.

Iwein uses the magical properties of the fountain to his advantage in his attempt to win back Laudine's favor. The fountain with its violent storm and Iwein's victory over the knight who came to defend it brought Iwein and Laudine together initially, a fact that shows a strange but apt connection between violence and female affection.¹⁵⁹ Knights jousted against each other – that is, they engaged in violence – in order to impress women, or perhaps to win the hand of a particular woman. This is evinced in Wolfram's *Titarel* (circa 1217)¹⁶⁰ when Sigune warns Schionatulander that he must first win her love through knightly combat before she can reward him (71.3-4). When Iwein returns to the well at the end of the adventure, he intends to become the cause of violence by pouring water on the stone over and over until Laudine is forced to forgive and accept him back into her affection (7792-96). He realizes that this will become an act of violence against the self as well:

“gewinne ich kumber dâ von,
sô bin ich kumbers wol gewon

¹⁵⁹ The scenario of Iwein's defeat of the male protector subsequent to pouring water on the stone from the fountain – the symbol of femininity – is echoed in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's post-classical romance, *Lanzelet* (circa 1210), in which Lanzelet slays a lady's father after sleeping with her, gaining through his victory both the lady and her father's (other) possessions (*Lanzelet* 1084-216).

¹⁶⁰ According to Gibbs and Johnson, internal evidence suggests the date of 1217 for the writing of *Titarel* (Gibbs 192).

und lîd ich gerner kurze tage
 danne ich iemer kumber trage.
 doch lîd ich kumber iemer mê
 irn getuo der kumber ouch sô wê
 daz ich noch ir minne
 mit gewalt gewinne.” (7797-804)¹⁶¹

Iwein suffers because of the lack of Laudine’s love and will suffer for the rest of his days if she does not forgive him, but, if he pours water on the stone, then he is just as much the victim of the storm as Laudine is. He would rather suffer the terror and danger of the storm, which is of short duration, than endure her disdain any longer. Iwein intentionally uses the violence unleashed in the fountain ritual to elicit a response from Laudine, but the term *gewalt* in line 7804 is ambiguous; it can be taken figuratively to mean ‘by force,’ i.e., “I intend to force (or compel) her to return my love.” It is clear that Iwein’s intention is not to use violence against Laudine, but to win back her favor. Past violence serves Iwein well in that Lunete lists the accolades of the Knight with the Lion, of whose identity Laudine is still unaware, in order to impress Laudine with his virtues as a protector of the fountain (7868-75). Iwein’s violent attempt to bring himself back into Laudine’s favor is effective, although only with the help of Lunete’s trickery; Lunete tricks Laudine into swearing an oath that she will do whatever is in her power to help the Knight with the Lion win back the love of his wife (7876-935).

¹⁶¹ ““If I suffer because of it, I am accustomed to suffering, and I would rather suffer a short while than suffer all my days. But I would suffer for the rest of my life, if the trouble did not cause her just as much pain, so that I must win her love through violence.””

14. Chapter conclusion

Gewalt in *Iwein* is perpetrated by humans, both male and female, a lion, otherworldly creatures, and the elements. On more than one occasion in this romance, the instigator of a violent act is a woman. Laudine is the first example. The violence associated with Laudine is always indirect; she does not carry out the violence herself, but has it carried out for her. In the case of the fountain, her husband – first King Ascalon and then Iwein – carries out her will in opposing those who pour water on the rock. Others carry out Laudine's will in punishing Lunete for her supposed crime, and others turn on her accusers to burn them at the stake when Iwein proves Lunete's innocence. Another example is the elder sister who refuses to divide the inheritance with her younger sibling. Though the violence the younger sister suffers is at first emotional, it becomes physical when she falls ill as a result of her arduous search for Iwein. Violence between the sisters is also physical by extension through Gawein and Iwein who fight on their behalf. The lion is violent in three different ways. He first fights the dragon in order to defend himself. Then, he tries to commit suicide when he believes that Iwein is dead. Lastly, he fights for Iwein against other knights and giants. After the initial slaying of the dragon, all of the lion's deeds are represented as justified acts of violence that are undertaken out of loyalty to Iwein. Otherworldly creatures in *Iwein* who commit violence include a dwarf and three different giants. In contrast to the lion, these creatures commit unjustified acts of violence either to get something they want, or out of pure maliciousness, as would appear to be the case with the two giants who keep three hundred women in a state of near-starvation. Knights commit both justified and unjustified violence. Gawein's fight with Iwein on behalf of the elder sister is justified, but not because the elder sister's cause was honorable; it wasn't. Gawein's fight was justified because she asked him to fight on her behalf; knights fought at the request of a lady

whether or not the cause was morally honorable in the modern sense of the word “honorable.” The text gives no indication of whether Gawein knew the circumstances that had caused the elder sister to ask him to fight for her, but this point is irrelevant; the important point is that he did not stop to ask whether the cause was a morally honorable one. By contrast, Meljakanz’s abduction of Ginover and his subsequent jousts with the Knights of the Round Table constituted unjustified violence; their violence against him was justified because he had abducted the queen.

The elements cause violence when an intruder approaches the fountain and pours water on the stone. The fountain is symbolic of Laudine and femininity. When Iwein initially pours water on it, he must overpower its/Laudine’s protector just as Lancelot overpowers a male protector, in this case the lady’s father, after he has slept with her in Ulrich’s narrative. The violence that ensues when a knight pours water on the stone above the fountain is symbolic of a woman’s emotional turmoil when a man approaches her with unwanted attentions. The fountain is the initial catalyst for violence in *Iwein*, and the factor that brings Iwein and Laudine together, both at the beginning and at the end of the romance.

Throughout the romance, the narrator represents Iwein as a knight of superlative prowess. This is his strength as well as the cause of his weakness because, although he is able to win Laudine through an initial act of violence against King Ascalon, he loses her affection when his enthusiasm for knightly violence and Gawein’s encouragement cause him to delay his return beyond the time that Laudine stipulated. Iwein’s failure to return shows his basic character failing: a lack of *mâze*. This failing, which is the same as that of Erec in Hartmann’s earlier narrative, expresses itself in the opposite way that Erec’s lack of *mâze* initially does. Whereas Erec forgets knightly combat in order to sleep with his wife, Iwein neglects his wife in favor of knightly combat. This causes him to lose both his honor and his sanity when Lunete denounces

him at King Arthur's court. After Iwein regains his reason, he builds up his reputation again through benevolent violent acts as the Knight with the Lion, but it takes both violence and trickery to win back Laudine's affection after he has lost it.

Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois*: Violence of a Christian Knight

1. Introduction

Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois* (circa 1215) is full of acts of violence, from King Joram's defeat of all the Knights of the Round Table to the large battle toward the end of the narrative, when Wigalois defeats the villain named Lion. The violent encounters of the main body of the *Wigalois* narrative, set in motion by Nereja's arrival at King Arthur's court and extending through Wigalois's defeat of Roaz, are justified acts of violence that involve a grand attempt at conflict resolution. These acts of violence are justified¹⁶² because the original conflict resulted from Roaz's usurpation of the kingdom of Korntin through the murder of King Jorel and his men and the inherent victimization of King Jorel's wife and daughter. Though not all conflict resolution in medieval narrative involves violence, this particular instance requires multiple acts of violence before it can be resolved. Indeed, those conflicts that are resolved without violence in Middle High German Arthurian legends constitute the exception rather than the rule. The cause of these multiple acts of violence is Roaz's traitorous behavior; the reason

¹⁶² The conflict against Roaz is legitimate within the confines of the fictional Arthurian world. Yet it would have been legally justified in reality as well, to the extent that we can understand such a concept in the Middle Ages; it was understood to be the task of the sovereign during this period to quell violence by means of controlled violence. Because of this, knights were viewed as benefactors when they worked in the king's service (Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence* 95). In the case of *Wigalois*, the king in question is King Arthur (1785-811). However, as Brown points out, the concept of "law" in the Middle Ages does not unproblematically coincide with our modern definition since the medieval concept of "law" could equally well refer to a "right" or a "custom" as to a "law" in the modern sense (10).

the conflict must be resolved is because the queen and her daughter, Larie, are still being victimized – they are not in possession of the kingdom that is their due after the death of King Jorel. Furthermore, given the medieval Christian background of the narrative, it was believed that God would not allow such an injustice to prevail and many knights believed that God used knightly violence to bring about justice (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 75). Thus, Wirnt sets up a series of minor conflicts that Wigalois must resolve through violence in order to reach and defeat the original source of the conflict, Roaz.

The violence used to achieve conflict resolution in *Wigalois* is justified for three reasons.

- 1) According to the monk Gratian, who wrote the *Decretum*, a treatise on the law of war, righting a wrong or fighting a war under proper authority were the only battles a knight could justly fight (Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence* 66-67). Thus, the violence that Wigalois undertakes is justified because he attempts to right the wrong that Roaz caused when he murdered King Jorel.
- 2) Wirnt von Grafenberg sanctifies Wigalois's actions by making him a Christian knight who seeks to defeat the pagan Roaz (3652-54). Furthermore, Roaz has allied himself with a devil in order to defeat the Christian King Jorel (3656-61). By making Roaz and his court followers of Mohammed and through Roaz's act in allying himself with a devil, the author has constructed a type of holy war between Roaz and the intensely Christian Wigalois. In the Middle Ages, religious leaders viewed holy wars as a new path to salvation that God created so that knights would not have to abandon the world and enter the priesthood in order to save their souls (Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence* 69; *Holy Warriors* 75). Violence undertaken to defeat a pagan who had usurped the throne of a Christian king would have been fully justified in the eyes of religious leaders of the time; the battle is between good and evil.
- 3) Wigalois fits in with the

clerical injunction to defend widows and orphans, as King Jorel's death left his wife and daughter victimized and without protection (Kaeper, *Chivalry and Violence* 77).

3. Women and violence

The first acts of violence that occur in Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois* occur after Ginovere refuses a magic belt that King Joram has offered her (279-94, 427-40). Since this grand act of violence, which involves multiple jousts with all of the Knights of the Round Table, initially involves a woman, this discussion of violence in *Wigalois* begins by considering violence and women.

It is less common in *Wigalois* for women to be directly involved in conflict or conflict resolution, although there are certain exceptions, such as the female warrior Marine who fights and dies in the final battle of the romance against Lion the Terrible (9799-822, 11001-36). Just as in other Arthurian romances, when women are involved in violence at all, they tend to be the cause of it. There may be several reasons for this. Three of the principal causes of violence against women are: 1) when a lady's beauty incites unbridled passion or lust; 2) because a wicked individual – and not necessarily a human individual – has fallen under the power of *minne*, and this may also be the result of the woman's beauty; or 3) because someone has killed a lady's beloved knight. Whatever the cause, the narrator waxes eloquent about the knight's duty to protect ladies:

ezn sol ouch noch dhein biderbe man
 nimmer gerne übersehen,
 swâ dehein schade mac geschehen
 deheinem reinen wîbe,
 ern wendez mit sînem lîbe;

daz ist mîn sit und ouch mîn rât,
 wan swaz diu werlt vreude hât,
 diu kumt uns von den wîben. (2091-98)¹⁶³

This advice is so important that the narrator repeats himself with the pithy wise saying: “man sol reiner wîbe nôt / dankes nimmer übersehen” (10459-60).¹⁶⁴ The protection of ladies was part of a knight’s honor. This wise saying constitutes the crux of the romance; it is the reason why the conflict engendered by Roaz’s traitorous behavior toward King Jorel must be resolved, because this conflict has left Jorel’s wife and daughter unprotected. This conflict falls under the third category of the kinds of violence of which women are the reason; Jorel is the ‘beloved knight’ who has been killed. His lady, as well as his daughter, must be avenged. When Nereja comes to the Knights of the Round Table for help, the knights are obligated to respond. Not only is the Round Table known for taking on any and all adventures, it would be to their dishonor to ignore Nereja’s plea.

The episode at the beginning of the narrative with Queen Ginovere is an unusual one with regard to the reasons why women (usually inadvertently) tend to motivate men to acts of violence. However, Queen Ginovere is only indirectly involved in violence when she, on Gawein’s advice, rejects a magic belt that the stranger Joram has offered her (*Wigalois* 370-430). True to his promise, Joram fights the knights of the court for the belt (270-94, 445-569). It would more correctly be stated that Joram is the cause of violence here, because his offer of the

¹⁶³ ‘No virtuous man should ever overlook any harm done a pure woman without countering it with his very life. That is my custom and also my advice, because whatever joy is in the world comes to us from the ladies.’

¹⁶⁴ ‘One should never overlook a pure woman’s distress.’

belt to Ginovere is a ruse to create an excuse to fight Gawein. He knows that Ginovere must reject the gift, because it would be unseemly for her to accept it, as Gawein informs her (371-83). Joram uses Ginovere as a pawn to pick a fight with Gawein. Joram's object in singling out Gawein becomes clear when he takes Gawein prisoner, gives him the magic belt, and asks him to marry his niece (602-14, 960-63, 1000-14).

The violent encounter culminating in the joust between King Joram and Gawein is an example of justified violence with a benevolent goal. Joram does not intend to harm the Knights of the Round Table, but only to defeat them in a joust. It is unclear why Joram employs such an elaborate means of challenging Gawein. He could have done this without the charade with Ginovere,¹⁶⁵ but the offer of the magic belt to Ginovere results in a more interesting narrative than would have been possible had Joram simply challenged and defeated Gawein outright, as the magic belt would certainly have enabled him to do in either case.

No further instance of violence occurs until after Nereja appears at King Arthur's court. Nereja is more directly involved in instigating violence in *Wigalois* than is Ginovere. Lady Nereja is involved in conflict resolution because she comes to King Arthur's court in the hope of finding a knight who will conquer the usurper Roaz (1716-68). The conflict began ten years before Nereja's request to the Knights of the Round Table, when Roaz murdered King Jorel and

¹⁶⁵ A belt could symbolize a woman's chastity in medieval narrative as it does in the case of Brünhilda in the *Nibelungenlied* (839-49). The offer of the magic belt in *Wigalois* is the only hint of the unchaste nature that Ginover/Guinevere exhibits in Chrétien de Troyes's *The Knight of the Cart (Lancelot)* (259).

all the knights and boys in the castle at Korntin (3705-32).¹⁶⁶ This left an imbalance in the Arthurian world, especially since Roaz allies himself with a devil in order to accomplish his task (3669). Both for the narrator and for the audience in the medieval Christian world, Roaz's dark alliance makes him damned to defeat from the outset. Furthermore, as stated earlier, Jorel's wife and daughter have been left unprotected and unavenged. A battle against Roaz is, therefore, justified for two reasons: 1) there is a wrong that needs to be righted, and 2) Christians are called upon to defend orphans and widows (Bumke 384). According to Kaeuper, these basic royal obligations were: "a staple of the chivalric ethos" (*Chivalry and Violence* 104). Nereja's arrival constitutes the first step in resolving this conflict.

On the other hand, Nereja instigates violence by coming to King Arthur's court to seek a champion. By emphasizing the danger of the adventure, Nereja states her case in a way that makes her request impossible to refuse; to refuse to undertake the adventure after Nereja's claim that many have already died in the attempt would be to admit cowardice (1761-68). The knightly code of honor did not permit one to deny an adventure as too dangerous. Nereja could be fairly confident that her request for a champion would be honored.

Nereja's request has consequences for those unrelated to the conflict with Roaz. When she asks Wigalois where they should sleep for the night, she suggests seeking shelter with a hero whose fortress is nearby, but then immediately tries to dismiss the idea as too dangerous, because those who wish to receive the host's hospitality must first best him in a joust (1928-62). Again, Nereja's suggestion is impossible to refuse. Her counsel that such hospitality is "böese ze

¹⁶⁶ The ghost of King Jorel states that he has suffered for his sins for ten years (4815-21). It was ten years previously that he died at the hands of Roaz. The maiden Larie was three years old at the time (3760-63).

gewinnen dâ” ‘won at too high a gamble’ (1956) only serves to add fuel to the challenge, whether or not this is her intention. In this way her attempt to dissuade Wigalois from the joust is similar to her request at King Arthur’s court for a champion – both dissuasion and request are equally as effective in engaging the knight because no worthy knight would turn from such a challenge. Furthermore, Nereja already believes Wigalois is too young and inexperienced to be useful as a knight (1811-18). To turn from this challenge would only confirm her suspicion and demean him in her eyes. Wigalois’s exclamation is significant:

“vrouwe, nein, durch got!
ich wil allez iuwer gebot
leisten an andern dingen;
mir muoz hie gelingen,
od ich verliuse swaz ich hân.” (1958-62)¹⁶⁷

This statement reveals just how significant this battle is. Wigalois would lose his honor as a knight entirely if he accepted Nereja’s suggestion that they forgo this place of rest and go elsewhere. Her un-refusable suggestion of this place of rest results in the death of the knight who had been their potential host (1995-2000).¹⁶⁸ Justifiable knightly violence undertaken for sheer sport on the part of the host has resulted in accidental death. Nereja is upset by the incident

¹⁶⁷ ““Lady, no, for God’s sake! I will fulfill all of your commands in other matters, but here I must succeed, or I will lose what I have.””

¹⁶⁸ Kaeuper points out that such events can show a disparity between reality and fictitious portrayals, since knights gradually added safeguards when they were fighting for sport; they sometimes used blunted weapons because the object was not to kill the opponent (*Chivalry and Violence* 165).

(2014), but Wigalois has taken the first step in proving himself worthy in her eyes to undertake the mission before him.

The next occasion for proving his mettle involves a more traditional ‘damsel in distress.’ When Wigalois hears a woman screaming in the distance, it would be to his dishonor to ignore it. He must respond. It is worth consideration, therefore, when Wigalois asks Nereja’s permission before he rides into the wood in defense of the lady whose cries sound as though she “vürhtet den tô” ‘fears death’ (2045). We note, however, that the text does not yet reveal that it is a woman who cries “wê! wê!” ‘O, woe!’ (2044). The complete line reads: “als daz dâ vürhtet den tô” ‘as though something fears death’ (2045). Moreover, Wigalois himself does not yet appear to know that it is a woman who cries out. He asks Nereja if she hears the anguish of the cries without designating who makes them: “hœrt ir die nô / und die klage die daz hât?” (2046-47).¹⁶⁹ The text later informs us that he must ride a whole mile to find the origin of the cries (2063). Thus, when he asks Nereja’s permission, it is to go and see what is wailing in fear of death (2048-51), despite the fact that one may argue, perhaps, that, as a knight, he is obligated to do so. It is evident that it is Wigalois’s inclination to find the source of the distress (2054-55), though the text does not indicate whether his goal is to rescue the person or animal distressed or to satisfy his curiosity. It may be significant, however, that the text refers to Wigalois at the point of his departure as “der helt” ‘the hero’ (2054), thus indicating his role as rescuer of the victim. It is a matter of courtesy that Wigalois asks Nereja’s permission before he leaves her to find out what made the cry. Wigalois would have talked her into granting him permission had she said no, just as he begs her to allow him to accompany her after she has initially forbidden it (1916-21), and just as he refuses to ride on without confronting their potential host in a joust

¹⁶⁹ ““Do you hear the distress and the wailing?””

(1958-62). He is careful to attain Nereja's permission before he follows his inclinations, even if he must beg her for it:

wand er solher zühte pflac
 daz er daz bewarte ie
 daz er wider ir willen nie
 deheiner slahte dinc getet
 ern erwürbez ê mit sîner bet;
 daz bescheinder ir an manger stet. (2198-203)¹⁷⁰

Nereja is just a servant, so she may not be aware of the unwritten code of chivalry that would obligate Wigalois to respond to a call of distress. Although one might postulate that even as a servant to noble women, she would understand that Wigalois ought to behave in accordance with knightly expectations. It is, however, not her place to order him to do so, but a plea from him to be allowed to take his leave would not be out of line, given his earlier commitment to her to go out on the *âventiure* presented at the Round Table.

The recurring motif of attempted rape is one of the more disturbing aspects of *Wigalois*. Concerning the intentions of the two giants toward the maiden who cried out, the text states: “sus wolden si über ir danc / ir willen mit ir gehabet hân” (2074-75).¹⁷¹ This reminds the reader of the one sin that prevents Gawein from sitting on the rock that sees into the heart (1477-78, 1506-07). The description of his crime is quite similar to that of the giants: “eine maget wol getân / die

¹⁷⁰ ‘Because he had such good breeding that he never acted against her will without first winning her over with his request; he did this on countless occasions.’

¹⁷¹ ‘Thus they wanted to have their way with her against her will.’

greif er über ir willen an, / sô daz si weinde unde schrê" (1511-13).¹⁷² This is particularly disturbing as Gawein/Gawan is often represented as the most honorable of the Knights of the Round Table. Indeed, in Wolfram's *Parzival*, King Arthur himself says that, in the event of Gawan's death, he will do battle with anyone who accuses Gawan, his nephew, of being *triuwenlôs* 'disloyal' (322.15-18). What does this say about the medieval attitude toward, and prevalence of, knights raping women? It is tempting to draw the conclusion that the narrator views this as a minor misdeed,¹⁷³ especially since Gawein is still able to lay his hand on the rock (1506-07) – the rock that prevents anyone *from laying a hand* on it who has committed any false deed (1485-88). Gawein was permitted to place his hand on the rock, but not to sit upon it as only Wigalois and King Arthur are able to do (1489-91, 1501-05). There is a discrepancy between the narrator's opinion of noble ladies and his weak censure of Gawein's crime (2091-98).

Gawein's violent act against a woman separates him from the moral perfection represented in his son; the narrator upholds Wigalois and not Gawein as the paragon of knightly virtue. In order to elevate Wigalois to this status, Wirnt degrades Gawein and chooses violence against a woman to achieve this rather than the violence of which Gawein is accused in *Parzival*—namely, that of slaying another knight in a friendly encounter, which the narrator views as so heinous a crime as to compare it with Judas's kiss of betrayal (*Parzival* 321.2-15).

¹⁷² 'He grabbed a beautiful maiden against her will, so that she cried and screamed'

¹⁷³ It may be that the prevalence as well as the visual representation of such crimes numbed individuals to their severity. According to Labbie and Terry-Fritsch, the medieval world was so often confronted with violent images that these images lost their power to impress the observer (3).

According to Kaeuper, the accusation of murder in a situation in which the knight believes he has killed in an honorable manner (as in a joust or tournament) was not uncommon in the Middle Ages (*Chivalry and Violence* 96). The narrator of *Wigalois* implies, however, that such an act is that of a traitor. Had Gawain's crime in *Parzival* proved true, it would have made him an outcast of the Round Table because it would have destroyed his honor and made him a "triuwenlôser man" 'faithless/disloyal man' (321.28-322.6). Wirnt could not choose such a crime without banishing Gawain from the Round Table. He chooses instead violence against a maiden, which does not have the precedence from another narrative of expulsion from King Arthur's elite society. By contrast, violence against a woman has the precedence of continued acceptance within that society; Keye's violence against Cunneware von Lalant when he beats her does not result in banishment from King Arthur's court in *Parzival* (151.21-30). Why does Wirnt feel the need to create a faultless hero, and why is it necessary for him to be the *only* faultless knight? By making Wigalois a completely virtuous knight, Wirnt creates a knight whom God can miraculously rescue (6406-68) and to whom he may award victory without the tacit approval of sin that a crime such as Gawain committed would entail.

Wigalois's violence against the two giants is fully justified knightly violence against wrongdoers. In fact, Wigalois is obligated as a knight to defend the defenseless maiden who bewails her predicament as the text itself suggests (2091-98). The curious thing about this act of violence is that, after killing the first giant (2110-13) and defeating the second (2134-36), Wigalois expects this otherworldly creature to engage in courtly behavior – to follow the knightly code of honor in fulfilling a vow. He requires the giant to swear an oath that he will return the maiden to King Arthur's residence in Karidol and wait for him there (2137-45). There is no evidence in the text that Wigalois is anything other than completely confident that this oath

will be fulfilled. Wigalois goes on his way untroubled by any misgivings, and the text states that the giant did indeed fulfill his vow (2166-80). It is clear that Wigalois attributes the power of reason to the giants. Though their brutality is unchivalric, they are capable of following the precepts of chivalry once forced to do so. The reference in the text to the second giant as a man equal to Wigalois in readiness, bravery, and strength is significant (2120-21). It signals the ability if not the inclination to follow knightly precepts. Interestingly, though this giant is accorded equality with Wigalois in some respects, and though he is accorded the ability to fulfill a vow, the text suggests that the first giant gets what he deserves when he does not receive burial (2164-65), which would otherwise have been the custom if a noble yet erring knight had been slain.¹⁷⁴

Unchivalrous words result in death when a knight exchanges angry words with Wigalois over a dog. Wigalois and Nereja see a dog with which Nereja is delighted (2207-17). When Wigalois catches it and gives it to her, the text states: “des wart diu maget vil gemeit” ‘Because of this the maiden was very happy’ (2221). Wigalois is disinclined to return it when the owner appears shortly afterward (2218-67). It is difficult to say what Wigalois’s reaction would have been if the Red Knight’s manner had been more polite and pleading, but his gruff manner in demanding the return of the dog does nothing to endear him to Wigalois. The Red Knight threatens him with death, loss of honor, and a wounded body (2243-55). Wigalois states that the Red Knight’s words are beneath him: “diu rede zæme einem wîbe” ‘These words would be appropriate if spoken by a woman’ (2256). The words bandied between Wigalois and the Red Knight are not calculated to diffuse violence, but to ignite it. The Red Knight reacts “mit zorne”

¹⁷⁴ The reason Roaz is not buried at the end of the narrative is because he is carried off by devils (8136-38).

‘with wrath’ (2268), but Wigalois is “harte vrô” ‘very glad’ (2277) at the opportunity to fight the man who has threatened him (2278-80).

Historically, occasions of violence were not always occasions for grief, as this fictitious scene reflects. The Truce of God in the eleventh century, which banned fighting from Wednesday to Sunday,¹⁷⁵ failed because, rather than viewing violence as an unfortunate necessity, knights wanted to fight (Bloch 414). Furthermore, all attempts to stamp out tournaments failed (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 49, 67-68). Bloch writes: “To suppress violence completely was a vain dream” (413). Under the peace movements, certain acts of violence were still permissible, but historical Christian priests, who forbade disputes over land or debt (Bloch 414), would certainly have denigrated the hostility between Wigalois and the Red Knight over a dog.

The joust with this man has consequences similar to Wigalois’s battle with their potential host earlier (1995-2000). Wigalois’s lance shaft pierces the knight’s body until it can be seen on the other side (2307-09). This violence is justified by the fact that the stranger has threatened Wigalois, thus making battle inevitable; Wigalois must battle the knight to retain his honor. Furthermore, the Red Knight initiates the battle, riding straight at Wigalois upon coming out of the wilderness (2285-94). There is no attempt to diffuse violence either on the part of Wigalois or the Red Knight. Because the Red Knight’s manner of address makes it impossible for Wigalois to retreat from open violence, it is ultimately the former’s act of unchivalry that causes violence. From the moment the Red Knight speaks to Nereja with the threat of killing whoever has given her the dog, a joust is inevitable, unless the Red Knight retreats. Wigalois’s statement

¹⁷⁵ For more information on the peace movements, see the Introduction to this dissertation, p. 21, and fn. 15, p. 21.

that the Red Knight's words "zæme einem wîbe" 'would be appropriate if spoken by a woman' (2256) indicate that honor is in the balance for Wigalois again; retaliation is necessary. At the same time, however, Wigalois insinuates that the Red Knight reproaches like a woman. Neither can retreat from battle after this exchange of insults.

Considering the violence already noted against women in this chapter, it is remarkable that the narrator glorifies the time of which he writes (the past) when, according to him, it was a frequent occurrence for ladies to be seen riding alone, unaccosted and unmolested (2356-63). This is another discrepancy in Wirnt's text, which marks a trail of violence against women like mile markers while denying in this passage that such acts of violence occurred. The narrator mentions another form of violence against women in this passage, which he attributes to the era in which he writes – that of malicious talk (2378-81). He states that this did not occur in the past (2364-69), and wishes lifelong suffering on all those who engage in gossip against women (2388-91).

Violence may also be perpetrated against a woman in the form of theft. When Wigalois sees a woman weeping, he decides to go to her to enquire what the matter is (2397-99, 2419-44). Not only has her beauty prize been stolen from her (2514-81), it has been taken "mit gewalte" 'by force' (2580, 2766-70). Like Nereja, this lady, the cousin of the Queen of Persia (2710-30), believes Wigalois incapable of helping her, or perhaps that he would even be unwilling to do so once he has realized the danger (2498-2504, 2608-2615). Yet, as soon as Wigalois realizes that injustice has occurred to this woman, he does not hesitate to take steps to rectify the situation. The lady tells him that he must be ready to fight the perpetrator of 'gewalt,' here again called the 'Red Knight' (2608-11, 2930-40). This theft of a woman's goods must precipitate physical violence against the thief.

Wigalois tries to resolve the conflict verbally before he challenges the Red Knight, who is later called Graf Hoyer (3127). He reasons first that her high birth deserves better treatment and loads the thief with the expectation of better conduct: “wær iu bekant / ir geburt und ir leben, / sô solt ir ir wider geben / das pfärt daz ir erteilet wart” (2788-91).¹⁷⁶ Then he argues that he has lowered himself to the point of requesting of the Red Knight that he return the horse: “mit ir bin ich hie ûf der vart / als ich iuch des biten wil. / swie mir der bet doch sê ze vil” (2792-94).¹⁷⁷ He states that he believes he will be able to make it up to the Red Knight if he fulfills this request: “iedoch sô tuon ichz ûf den wân, / gewert ir mich der selben gebe, / daz ichz diene die wîle ich lebe” (2796-98).¹⁷⁸ Lastly, Wigalois mentions the hatred that the Red Knight has occasioned toward himself and – what he claims is the greatest dishonor – that he has done violence toward a woman (2799-805), and Wigalois adds a further censure of the Red Knight: by appending: “wan si daz pfärt mit rehte hêt” ‘Because she had the horse by rights’ (2805). Though this does nothing to strengthen Wigalois’s claim that the Red Knight has committed a gross *faux pas* against a lady, it does strengthen his argument that the knight should return the stolen articles. Wigalois thus gives the Red Knight the opportunity to amend his behavior, yet in vain; the Red Knight’s reply already contains the assumption that they will fight: “ir mugt mich niht gelêren, /

¹⁷⁶ ““If her high birth and her rank were known to you, you would return the horse that was given to her.””

¹⁷⁷ ““I have accompanied her here to request this of you, although this request annoys me.””

¹⁷⁸ ““Nonetheless, I ask it in the assumption that, if you fulfill this request, I will be able to repay you as long as I live.””

wand ich wil mîner êren / an iuch lâzen sô ich minnest mac” (2810-12).¹⁷⁹ The text states that Wigalois could not regain the prize for the lady in an amicable manner (2935-45). Wigalois challenges the Red Knight to a fight on the morrow (2824-26).

Though the Red Knight accepts the challenge, he is unimpressed by Wigalois, believing him too young to best him in a joust and calling his strength “ein wint”¹⁸⁰ ‘a wind’ (2905-15). The text attributes the Red Knight’s failure to “sîn unreht und sîn hôchvart” ‘his injustice and his arrogance’ (3005). The implication is that, since God is always on the side of the just, Wigalois cannot lose (2919-23), though this does not stop the wronged maiden from fervently praying for his strength in battle (3049-64). In this act of justified violence, Wigalois finally manages to defeat a knight without accidentally killing him (3073-78). Thus, this joust is justified violence with a justified end; the Red Knight must go to King Arthur’s residence to await Wigalois’s return and the two part on amicable terms (3091-131), and the maiden receives her stolen horse (3187-90).

Knights fighting against the same enemy sometimes served only as competition. Wigalois encounters a knight who likewise pursues the distinction of becoming the knight who

¹⁷⁹ ““You cannot teach me, because I will give up as little of my honor as possible to you.””

¹⁸⁰ According to Lexer, “wint” is a pictorial representation of “etwas nichtiges, das nicht in betracht kommt, ohne wirkung bleibt” ‘Something void that does not come into consideration, that has no effect.’

will free Korntin, though Wigalois does not yet know the nature of the adventure.¹⁸¹ They must do battle to determine who will go on the adventure. When Wigalois sees numerous lances stuck into the ground around a tent, his first thought is that here he will have an opportunity to fight, whether the outcome be good or bad (3320-28). It is clear from this passage that Wigalois longs for knightly combat; it is not merely a necessity but a strong desire:

ouch was dem rîter dar vil ger:
 dô er ersach sô manic sper
 umb daz gezelt stecken,
 daz begunde an im dô wecken
 beidiu manheit unde kraft. (3320-24)¹⁸²

There is no hint that altruism – in this context the desire to provide justice to the wronged wife and daughter of Jorel – motivates Wigalois’s desire to fight when he sees the lances. In fact, Wigalois only learns the background to the adventure subsequent to this encounter (3615-796). Though Wigalois does not know the nature of the adventure, his explanation is enough for the knight in this scene to understand that they are pursuing the same goal (3357-406).

This knight, too, describes Wigalois’s strength as “ein wint” (3385). He is so convinced that Wigalois’s prowess is inadequate to the task before him that he suggests they fight to see which of them should go to Korntin and which should return home (3399-416). Wigalois uses

¹⁸¹ Wigalois knows only that Nereja’s lady sent her to seek help from King Arthur’s knights, and that many have already died on this adventure, in which there will be great opportunity for fighting (1750-68).

¹⁸² ‘The knight also greatly desired to go there where he saw many lances stuck around the tent. That began to awaken in him both bravery and strength.’

this to his advantage – he requests that the knight share some of his lances, squires, and horses with him, since he is disadvantaged in comparison with his fellow combatant: “ouch hân ich lûtzet krefte / ir seht wol selbe ich bin ein kint” (3452-53).¹⁸³ Rather than attempt to dispel violence, Wigalois tries to balance the odds (3432-53). The narrator increases the suspense by stating in advance that one of the knights will not survive this encounter (3501-02). The narrator’s mode of hinting at the identity of the doomed knight only intensifies this feeling of suspense through an aura of mystery and foreboding:

dem herren begunde swâren
 sîn muot harte sêre;
 wan daz er durch sîn êre
 den strît niht mohte lân,
 er hêt sichs gerne abe getân,
 wand im wîssagte sîn muot,
 als er den liuten ofte tuot
 die vor in wizzen den tât. (3507-14)¹⁸⁴

Though the lord senses the approach of his own demise, his sense of honor forbids him to turn back. After a hard battle, Wigalois drives his lance yet again through his opponent, who falls from his horse dead (3353-60). Wigalois, whose strength was said to be “ein wint,” has won the right to fight at Korntin through this act of justified violence.

¹⁸³ ““I also have little strength. You see for yourself that I am a youth.””

¹⁸⁴ ‘A sense of foreboding greatly oppressed the lord, but because of his honor he could not leave the fight. He would gladly have called it off, because his understanding foretold him his fate as it often does to people who know that death is before them.’

The death of a knight could bring great sadness as it did for Japhite, but it could also bring great joy, as Roaz's death did for nearly everyone else (with the exception of the women at his court). The narrator reports this with the litotes typical of Middle High German romance: "diu mære wurden wîten kunt / daz Rôaz wære erslagen; / daz hôrte man lützel iemen klagen" (8691-93).¹⁸⁵ The narrator's understatement should be read as "It was heard with great joy."

4. Violence against the self

More than any other battle in the narrative, the battle against this competitor for the adventure signals Wigalois's right to take on Roaz as an adversary and assume the role of Larie's defender, but several formidable opponents still stand between him and his ultimate foe. The first of these is the dragon, Pfetan, who terrifies the land. The narrator narrows the reader's focus from the populace at large to the grief of a single individual, Beleare. This episode is the first of a series that depicts violence against the self out of grief for the death of a beloved individual.

The death of a lady's beloved knight is a form of indirect violence against the lady. Beleare screams and does violence to herself when her husband, the count Moral of Jorophas, is snatched away by the feared dragon, Pfetan:

si was gevallen ûf daz gras
mit gezartem gebende;
ir vil wîze hende
brach si und ir rîch gewant;
in solhem jâmer er si vant

¹⁸⁵ 'The news was spread broadly that Roaz was slain; that was heard with little complaint.'

.....

mit nackenden armen,

mit zervuortem hâre;

.....

ir brust was swarz alsam ein kol,

daz bluot darunder geloufen;

mit slegen und mit roufen

hêt si ir lîp verderbet

und vil nâch gar ersterbet.

sus lac diu vrouwe âne maht,

der liehte tac was ir ein naht,

sine gehôrte noch gesach;

von herzeleide ir daz geschach. (4881-901)¹⁸⁶

As any good knight should, Wigalois hurries to the lady's side when he hears her screaming (4867-72). This is the second time in the narrative when a woman's screams are 1) a signal that unjustified violence has occurred, and 2) a precursor to justified violence. The narrator states that women scream "nâch wîbes sit" 'as is the custom with women' (4870) to express their

¹⁸⁶ 'She had fallen on the grass with torn clothes. She wrung her snow-white hands and tore her rich dress. In such distress he found her . . . with uncovered arms and disheveled hair. . . . Her breast was as black as coal, the blood had run down from it. She had disfigured her body with blows and torn out her hair and, so that she was near death. Thus, the lady lay unconscious. The lighted day was as night to her. She neither heard nor saw. This occurred because of her heart-rending suffering.'

affliction (4870-71). In both this case and in the case of the maiden who was snatched away from King Arthur's court by two giants (2039-167), screaming has the dual purpose of expressing anguished protest against the violence that occurred and calling for help. Although Belearé does not carry out violence against the dragon herself, her screams and actions call for violence against it, providing Wigalois with the opportunity to increase his honor by the chivalric act of responding to a damsel in distress (Jones 93). Thus, Wigalois and Belearé play classic male and female roles in this scene: the woman cries out in anguish, the knight responds.

Belearé's violence to herself recalls Herzeloide's behavior upon hearing of the death of her husband, Gahmuret, in *Parzival*, when she tears her shirt open in front of all those assembled (110.23-24). Belearé's behavior is yet more violent. When Wigalois finds her, she has not only torn her dress, but she has also beaten her breast until it is black and she is close to death (4883-84, 4893-97). The narrator heightens the impression of violence by stating that her skin, wherever it is bare, is "alsam ein snê" 'white as snow' (4890), while her breast, because she has beaten it, is "swarz alsam ein kol" 'as black as coal' (4893).

The lady's expressions of anguish grieve Wigalois. He attempts to comfort her with the assurance of further violence:

"Owê, vrouwe, wie tuot ir sô?
 gehabt iuch wol und sît vrô;
 daz ir sælic müezet sîn!
 wand ich durch iuch den lîp mîn
 wâgen wil unz in den tôt,
 ob ich dâ mit iuwer nôt

erwenden mac und iuwer leit.“ (4903-09)¹⁸⁷

Wigalois's offer of assistance is extreme and extremely physical. He offers violence even if he loses his life in engaging in that violence if it will relieve her grief. That he does not know the lady or the source of her grief is insignificant; his proper role as a knight demands that he relieve her suffering through violence. Wigalois makes no attempt to offer any other form of assistance. There is a tacit implication that only physical violence could relieve this lady's sorrow, whatever the source of her sorrow may be. Indeed, Wigalois's words do nothing to comfort Belear, for, after an inadequate explanation of her grief, she begins beating herself again (4916-42). Only after Wigalois dismounts and stops her from doing herself further harm does she explain that the dragon snatched her husband away (4943-48). When Belear realizes that Wigalois's intention is to attack the dragon, rather than finding solace in this, she fears for his life (4968-77). He states, however, that he has traveled from Britain for the purpose of doing battle (4972-73).

Belear's violence against herself does not end with the physical cessation of beating her chest. The violence she desires for herself is more final. She states that she has been bereaved of joy, and now prays that God will divide her soul from her body (4920-35). This death wish is a recurring motif in *Wigalois* for women who have lost their husbands. It recurs with the pagan Japhite, who wails in grief to Mohammed (7714-44); and with Liamere, who succumbs to insanity before death (9975-10035). The narrator's conclusion concerning love recalls Gottfried von Straßburg's descriptions of love from the prolog of *Tristan*:¹⁸⁸ “herzeliebe ist arbeit; / ir ende

¹⁸⁷ ““Alas, lady, why are you acting this way? Be well and happy for you shall know good fortune! Because I will risk my life even unto death if I can turn your affliction and your suffering from you.””

¹⁸⁸ See for example (*Tristan* 204-07).

bringet herzeleit” (*Wigalois* 7749-50).¹⁸⁹ The narrator depicts a love so strong that the loss of it brings the desire for death.

Beleare’s death wish is a form of violence against the self, but she seeks an end to her suffering through death. Gawein’s reaction to news of his wife’s death is, by contrast, potentially far more devastating, because, unlike Beleare’s prayer, which by its very nature leaves her future in the hands of God, Gawein speaks against God: “sold ieman wâfen schrîen / über gotes gewalt, daz tæte ouch ich, / wand er hât beroubet mich / mîner hœhsten wunne” (11557-60).¹⁹⁰ The knight’s reaction to his wife’s death is in keeping with the violence of his vocation, just as the reaction of the ladies is in keeping with their more passive role. But whereas Beleare’s death wish would release her soul from her body, Gawein’s desire to take on God as an adversary would mean the loss of his soul.

The source of the conflict resulting in Beleare’s grief and violence against herself is the dragon that has devastated the land for the last ten years, stealing both men and horses (4691-96). Beleare’s suffering is not *Wigalois*’s original motivation in seeking the dragon. *Wigalois* has already been told of the dragon’s violent acts, and it has been his intention to engage the dragon in battle since he left Korntin (4774-80). Yet Beleare’s suffering brings immediacy to the horror that the dragon, Pftan, inspires. Beleare puts a face to the nameless men and horses that Pftan has stolen, both for the reader as well as for *Wigalois*. He wavers only momentarily in fear before steeling his resolve to fight the dragon (5002-18).

¹⁸⁹ ‘Real love is pain; its end brings heartfelt suffering.’

¹⁹⁰ ‘If someone would call out protest against God’s power, I would do so as well, because he has robbed me of my greatest joy.’

The narrator systematically vilifies the dragon first through his vivid picture of Beleare's suffering, then by depicting the pitiable state of the knights whom Pfetan has caught, and lastly by causing the dragon to throw the eponymous hero off a cliff. On this occasion the dragon has caught four knights in his tail, and wound it around them three times, crushing them until they are nearly dead (5041-52). One of these knights is Beleare's husband. In case the reader has forgotten it, Wigalois recalls Beleare's grief; he thinks of her before attacking the dragon, praying for God's help: "daz ich dem süezen wîbe / erledige ir gesellen" (5082-83).¹⁹¹

Wigalois's prayer confirms that this is a conflict between good and evil; Wigalois must prevail against this formidable enemy because the dragon is a "tievels bot" 'devil's messenger' (5080). Furthermore, the dragon has caused a lady grief, and causes harm to the world (5084-85).

Wigalois's prayer is answered in that he manages to drive the lance into the dragon before it is even aware of him (5094-99). The subsequent violence against Wigalois compounds the argument for justified violence. Even as Pfetan is dying, the dragon rips off Wigalois's armor, knocks him unconscious, and squeezes him until the blood shoots out of his nose and ears (5109-19). At the end of the encounter, Pfetan is dead, and Wigalois is unconscious at the bottom of a cliff (5120-40). Everything in this scene points to fully justified knightly violence undertaken in order to attain conflict resolution – resolution from the pain, terror, and death that the dragon has caused for the last ten years, and the relief of Beleare's suffering.

Expressions of tumultuous grief are not limited in *Wigalois* to occasions when a good knight dies, although the rending of garments and other expressions of deeply felt grief occur three times in circumstances of a knight's unjust death or near-death. On two of these occasions, grief is expressed for the same knight, but by different people. Beleare tears her dress when she

¹⁹¹ "“that I may deliver the sweet lady's companion.””

believes the dragon has killed her husband (4883-84). When King Amire of Libia dies, there is nearly unanimous regret at the untimely passing of a laudable king.¹⁹² A page tears off his clothes at the death of King Amire and refuses clothing (9800-17, 9937-43). Lady Liamere cuts off her braids, tears the brocade and ermine from her body, and refuses to wear any clothing when the same king, her husband, is killed (9991-10011). But in evidence of the fact that grief is universal, i.e., not limited to the “good” side, the pagan Japhite is emotionally overcome by her violent emotions because of the death of her husband, Roaz, the traitor of the narrative. The text states that her heart broke so loudly that it could be heard like the sound of a breaking branch (7679-82). Like Beleare, Japhite tears her clothes when she sees her dead husband (7673-76). Her grief is so terrible that:

dehein man wær sô grimme
des muotes noch des herzen,
hêt er ir jâmers smerzen
und ir grôze klage ersehen,
im wær ze weinen geschehen. (7685-89)¹⁹³

Only Liamere’s descent into insanity when her husband is killed can equal the violence of Japhite’s emotions at the death of Roaz (10008-22). Japhite’s grief is, in a way, more violent than Roaz’s death because, rather than dying in battle as a knight, Japhite is victimized by the violence of others with no means of defense. Unlike Beleare, who only prays that God deliver her in death, Japhite willfully dies. She speaks to her husband’s corpse, promising that she will

¹⁹² Only Lion, the man who killed him, is indifferent to Amire’s death.

¹⁹³ ‘No man, be he ever so grim in mind or heart, could have witnessed her miserable pain and her great lament without being moved to tears.’

no longer hesitate to join him as his companion in death, whether it be in Heaven or Hell (7701-08). Japhite does not linger long (7737-44). Roaz is a murderer, yet his death engenders violent grief resulting in death.

Others lament Roaz's death besides Japhite. Roaz's "gesinde" 'entourage' (7773) also raises a lament at his death and because of Japhite's loyalty (7770-82). The text states that they tear at their hair (7775), but this act of self-inflicted violence is mild in comparison to the violence they wish to do Wigalois.

Throughout the narrative, acts of violence breed further acts of violence unless someone or something intervenes. When Wigalois kills Roaz, the maidens want to murder Wigalois as he lies unconscious on the floor (7766-69, 7927-28). The gatekeeper, Count Adan, hinders them from committing this act, which would have been an atrocity both against knighthood and against themselves as women, since women were not normally permitted to wield weapons.¹⁹⁴ Adan throws himself over Wigalois to protect him, reasoning with the maidens that Wigalois's death at the hands of a woman after his fair knightly defeat of Roaz would be a great injustice (7929-56). In fact, killing Wigalois would be an act of unjustified violence, since he was justified in overcoming Roaz in knightly combat, and since he is in this scene completely defenseless. In order to dissuade them from doing further violence, Adan reminds the women of the violence that Roaz did to the maiden Larie in murdering her father and usurping the throne (7960-69). Roaz's original act of treachery against Jorel created a chain reaction of violent acts and violent deaths that lasted for a period of ten years. Many knights throughout these ten years attempted to defeat Roaz and win the hand of Larie before Wigalois succeeded (3380-404,

¹⁹⁴ See above, p. 70, fn. 84. Marine and Elamie, female warriors, are exceptions in Wigalois to the rule that women should not wield a sword (10108-10, 10796-804).

3760-79). Now, after Roaz is finally defeated, his wife dies in grief, and the violence very nearly continues with Wigalois's murder. The chain of violence ends with Adan's decision to protect Wigalois from the maidens' revenge.

The violence that the narrator depicts against Lady Liamere is a completely self-serving, un-knightly form of violence. No part of Lion's attack against Amire of Libia can be considered justified. The page, who, in his grief, does violence against himself, states: "mîner vrouwen Lîamêre, / der werden küniginne, / ist ir stætiu minne / mit gewalte entschumpfieret" (9859-9862).¹⁹⁵ The reason Lion "der ungehiure" 'the terrible' (9821) attacked King Amire was because Lion wanted Amire's wife, Liamere. The report of this violence causes Frau Larie to faint because Amire and Liamere are her cousins (9883-84). Such an act of unsolicited violence can only engender further violence as it does here, when many famous heroes unite to take vengeance against Lion (10064-83, 10095-110). An act of unjustified violence causes the necessity of justified violence against the original perpetrator.

The text focuses on Amire's death as an act of violence against Liamere rather than against Amire. The formidable group of knights threatens Lion and declares their determination to avenge Liamere: "und daz laster rechen / mit swerten an dînem lîbe, / daz du dem reinen wîbe / hât erslagen ir lieben man" (10079-82).¹⁹⁶ It is difficult to say whether these knights would have avenged Amire's death under other circumstances, but this instance is another example of knights responding to a lady's distress. This time knightly prowess cannot bring relief, as when

¹⁹⁵ "My lady Liamere's, the worthy queen's, abiding beloved has been violently defeated."

¹⁹⁶ "and to avenge this abuse upon you with swords, namely, that you have slain this lady's beloved husband."

Wigalois defeated the dragon and rescued Beleare's husband; Liamere is already dead and beyond consolation when the knights confront Lion; they are aware of this before they speak to him (10032-35, 10091-94). The ensuing battle against Lion can only mete out vengeance, which medieval knights saw as a form of just punishment for the evil that Lion has committed (Jones 88).

Besides the grief suffered at the death of a beloved knight, which is often given violent expression against the self, ladies suffered emotional agonies out of concern for the life of those same knights when they went into battle. When Wigalois sets out on his adventure after meeting Larie, her concern for him causes her distress: "diu hêt erliten / vil jâmers nâch dem rîter guot; / des was getrüebet ir der muot / und ir herze an vreuden wunt" (8723-26).¹⁹⁷ Likewise, Beleare expresses dismay when Wigalois insists upon setting out to defeat Roaz because she is certain that Wigalois goes to his death (6031-61). She states: "owê, sô sît ir verlorn" 'Alas, thus you are lost' (6039). Japhite watches the fight as her husband is wounded in the leg. The narrator describes her anguish at length:

dô daz sîn schœne wîp ersach,
 von grôzem leide ir herze brach;
 ir swære begunde stîgen
 und ir vreude sîgen;
 ir schœne verwandelt sich dâ gar;
 ir antlûtze wart missevar,
 daz ê in hôhem [ge]müete

¹⁹⁷ 'She [Larie] had suffered such anguish concerning the good knight that it turned her mind to sorrow and her heart was without joy.'

baz danne ein rôse blüete.

.....

diu ougen ir über liefen;

vil mangeln siuften tiefen

den nam si ûf von herzen

umb ir gesellen smerzen;

der tet ir innicliche wê. (7601-25)¹⁹⁸

The narrator focuses more on Japhite's suffering than Roaz's. As the defenseless observer of violence, Japhite's sufferings are more acute than those of her husband, whose active fighting prevents his awareness of emotional pain for the sufferings of a beloved that afflicts Japhite.

The notorious power of *herzeliep* 'love,' called *minne* in other Arthurian romances, causes these women greater grief than they would otherwise have suffered when knights went into battle or died in combat. The narrator philosophizes about whether it is *herzeliep* or *herzeleid* 'heart-felt pain' that ultimately causes Japhite's suffering, but he concludes only that too much thought on the subject could render his text arduous (7882-97). The subject of violence in love takes us to the next category of violence: love is involved in the first instance covered in the following section, which involves otherworldly creatures.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ 'When his beautiful wife saw that, her heart broke from great pain; her affliction grew; her joy waned. Her beauty changed completely; her face, which had always bloomed more beautifully than a rose when she was happy, turned wan. . . . She sighed deeply many times out of the depths of her heart because of her beloved's suffering, which caused her deepest pain.'

¹⁹⁹ The first instance of violence in *Wigalois* involves the two giants who abduct a maiden from King Arthur's castle, but, since this has already been covered in the section on

5. Otherworldly creatures

Love is indirectly the cause of violence when Wigalois encounters a singularly strong and ugly giantess named Ruel in the forest on his journey to the land of Glois (6285-401). This scene illustrates how an initial act of violence can cause violence toward individuals completely unrelated to the original act of violence. The original act of violence (as far as the reader knows) occurs when Flojir von Belamunt kills Ruel's husband, Feroz. Since Ruel cannot avenge her husband's death on Flojir, who also died in the encounter with Feroz, she irrationally intends to make Wigalois pay the penalty for Feroz's death (6356-62). The narrator gives no explanation for this other than: "sus verlôz si ir lieben man; / des wolde si in engelten lân" (6361-62).²⁰⁰ The text calls Ruel's husband "ir lieben man" 'her beloved husband' (6361). Though there is no description of Ruel's suffering, the adjective 'lieben' as a descriptor of her husband, and Ruel's desire for vengeance, allow the reader to assume an anguish at least vaguely similar to that which Japhite and Liamere suffer in the narrative when their husbands die in battle. Ruel's presumed suffering excites no knightly impulse on the part of Wigalois to defend her or to right a wrong, because Ruel is no defenseless lady wailing in grief; she takes vengeance in her own hands. Her desire for vengeance results in a misdirected attempt at conflict resolution because Wigalois, the object of her attack, did not cause her grievance. It is un-knightly act of violence against an individual who offers no defense (6363-77).

Wigalois's decision not to draw his sword on an unarmed woman is certainly chivalrous, but it endangers his life and necessitates another form of conflict resolution (6378-85, 6409-22).

violence against women, the first example covered under the heading "Otherworldly creatures" involves the bereaved giantess.

²⁰⁰ 'Thus she lost her beloved husband; for this she wanted to avenge him.'

Wigalois is able to force one of the two giants in the earlier episode to observe chivalrous behavior by returning the maiden to King Arthur's court, but with Ruel the narrator creates a situation in which it is impossible for Wigalois to defend himself. His magic belt is gone, so his strength is that of a regular man and he is no match for Ruel. His chivalric training has resulted in the unwise choice not to raise weapons against the giantess because, in spite of her large size, she appears to be a woman. Ruel binds his hands and intends to kill him with his own sword (6409-22). Just as Ruel's attack is misdirected violence, so is Wigalois's behavior misdirected chivalry. As a result, Wigalois has no input in determining the means of conflict resolution because the conflict overtakes him unprepared. Without even the threat of reciprocal violence, which had previously convinced a giant to follow a chivalrous mode of conduct, Ruel has no reason to waver in her determination to kill Wigalois.

In spite of Wigalois's apparent perfection, he has not yet learned to trust God implicitly in all violent encounters. Although the only thing that could save him in this situation is the intervention of God, Wigalois, instead of praying for deliverance, reacts with despair. Wigalois, "vür den trôst sîn zwîvel wac" 'for whom despair overcame hope' (6459), has already given himself up for lost: "des lebens was im gar verzigen" 'He had given up on his life' (6464). Nonetheless, in this situation, in which Wigalois's knightly prowess is useless, God still rescues him. The narrator informs us that Wigalois would have been lost if God had not permitted him to live longer (6461-68). Thus, we must draw the conclusion that it is God who uses Wigalois's horse and Ruel's fear of the dragon to deliver him; when Wigalois's horse begins to neigh and whinny, Ruel flees, fearing that it is the dragon (which Wigalois has previously killed), who knows where she spends her time (6425-59). Ruel's grieving love for her dead husband is no match for her fear of the dragon; she chooses to save her own life rather than exact her

vengeance on Wigalois. Finally, still powerless with his hands tied behind his back, Wigalois asks God for help (6494-504). Miraculously, the bands tying his wrists fall asunder (6505-07).

The loss of the magic belt in Wigalois's encounter with the dragon earlier becomes significant in this scene. Wirnt constructs a situation in which Wigalois, unconscious after his fight with the dragon, loses the magic belt without hope of its return when the fisher's wife steals it, hiding it even from her husband (5290-330, 5349-58, 5995-6010). The loss of the belt means that Wigalois no longer has any extraordinary powers beyond what is humanly possible. Wirnt has purposely removed the device that makes Wigalois undefeatable, thereby provoking his reliance on God to deliver him from danger.

The encounter with the giantess, Ruel, signals the beginning of Wigalois's development from a despairing individual who only thanks God after his deliverance in the case of the giantess, Ruel, to one who trusts God to deliver him out of all subsequent dangers. Whatever perpetrators or forms of violence Wigalois encounters, the reader is left with the impression that his actions and the actions of those around him, regardless of their intentions, are orchestrated by God. It is this very fatalistic attitude on the part of the narrator that rescues the romance from a lack of suspense, however, because the narrator calls the inevitability of God's positive intervention into question with the equally fatalistic utterance: "er ermet unde rîchet" 'He makes poor and he makes rich' (6473), the Middle High German equivalent of the expression from the book of Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away" (1.21). At first, the text seems to suggest that God's mercies are uncertain and subject to his whims:

ditz was sînes gwaltes spil,
daz er disem küenen man
sînen trôst an gewan,

den sîn herze ungerne liez;
 in ganzen zwîvel er in stiez,
 dâ von er sîne vreude lie.
 got der was genædic ie;
 daz erzeigter an disem rîter hie. (6476-83)²⁰¹

The last two lines rescue the passage from a portrayal of God as a vacillating Jekyll-and-Hyde figure who gives and takes away for the sheer sport of it. These lines show that the purpose of allowing Wigalois to fall into the hands of Ruel was so that God could demonstrate his unending mercy by delivering him from danger. The Ruel encounter serves as a warning, too, for it convinces Wigalois to swear by the pommel of his sword hilt that he will never be taken captive by man or woman again without a fight (6514-24). The reader may view it as a weakness in Wirnt's narrative that no situation arises in the romance that would give Wigalois the opportunity to put his oath into practice.

Wigalois still relies on his own prowess in the following battle with a dwarf (6546-731); the knowledge he has gained from his miraculous deliverance from the giantess is not apparent until shortly after this encounter. The only reference to religion in Wigalois's encounter with the dwarf is to the picture of Mohammed with which the dwarf's shield is decorated. Unlike previous jousts between Wigalois and other knights, this joust is untypical in that there is no reference to God's intervention. The dwarf, who takes umbrage with Wigalois's bravery, immediately takes up a lance against him (6549-625). Wigalois has no compunction about

²⁰¹ 'God was so powerful that it was easy for him to remove the confidence from this brave man, which he let go of unwillingly; God threw him into complete despair, so that his joy vanished. God has always been merciful; this he exemplified through this knight.'

attacking, although this cannot be viewed as an opportunity to put his oath into practice; unlike the giantess, the dwarf is armed. Furthermore, as evinced by his heraldic device, the dwarf is obviously of the heathen persuasion. Even without reference to the Christian God, the reference to Islam serves to predict the outcome of violence between the two knights, as if the engagement of the eponymous hero were not enough to sway the reader's expectations in his favor. Although Christians do not always defeat Muslims in Middle High German courtly literature, Wigalois is God's representative in a justified act of violence against the Lord's adversaries. As such, Wigalois must defeat followers of Islam, just as he must overcome all odds in the adventure.

The next obstacle Wigalois encounters is a wheel of swords and lances, whose spinning is driven by a brook (6773-79). Fasbender calls this wheel of swords: "ein fantastischer, ausgesprochen effizienter Automat aus dem Labor des Bösen. . . ." (157).²⁰² The 'evil' to which Fasbender refers is Roaz, who built the wheel (6773-82). By means of the wheel, Roaz attacks anyone who would try to reach Glois to challenge him. As a good knight, Wigalois's wheel is associated with a wheel of fortune from an earlier part of the narrative (1036-52). Roaz's wheel represents evil and potentially deals out death. The wheel would serve to make mincemeat of any adventurer successful in overcoming the dwarf, who guards the way to Glois. At the same time that the wheel protects Roaz, it also precludes negotiation with the intent of conflict resolution; Roaz attacks before the adventurer reaches him.

The shift in Wigalois's thinking, brought about by his escape from Ruel, is evident when he encounters the gate guarded by the spinning wheel (6773-84). When he realizes he is trapped by a deathly magical fog and the wheel (6808-27), Wigalois's first reaction is one of despair: "alrêrst wart im untrôst erkant" 'for the first time he knew despair' (6828). The word *alrêrst* 'for

²⁰² 'a fantastic, notably efficient machine from the laboratory of evil. . . .'

the first time' notwithstanding, this is the second time the text describes Wigalois as in despair, the first occasion being his near-death experience with Ruel. It becomes evident, however, that Wigalois has learned something from his encounters with Ruel; he convinces himself that God is in control of his destiny:

Dô der rîter daz ersach
 daz im leit und ungemach
 sô ofte an sîner vart geschach,
 wider sich selben er dô sprach
 “noch mac mîn wol werden rât:
 wes got mit mir gedâht hât,
 daz muoz benamen doch geschehen;
 ich wil ouch im des siges jehen.
 war umb gehabe ich mich niht wol?” (6830-38)²⁰³

Wigalois has learned to trust God even while facing seemingly impossible situations, and thus, to employ a supernatural means of conflict resolution. God delivered him from Ruel as well as from the bonds that held his wrists in that encounter; therefore, Wigalois reasons, God must have plans for him, and whatever God plans must inevitably come to pass. Since there is nothing he can do to deliver himself, Wigalois commends himself to God and falls asleep (6847-60). A

²⁰³ ‘When the knight saw that troubles and difficulties had occurred to him so often on his journey, he said to himself: “There may yet be help for me. Whatever God has intended for me, truly that must come to pass. I will proclaim him the victor here also. Why do I behave as though I were unhappy?”’

similar faith in God's protection and deliverance is later apparent when he encounters two giants; he immediately prays for God's protection:

“nu hilf mir, herre, des ist mir nôt,
 daz die liechten bloumen rô
 mîn bluot iht rôter mache;
 daz mînes tôdes iht lache
 diu ungetriuwe heidenschaft.” (7122-26)²⁰⁴

These three encounters – first with the giantess, Ruel, then with the spinning wheel, and finally with the two giants – show a shift in how Wigalois meets violence. With Ruel, he despairs, thanking God only after his deliverance. With the wheel, he despairs, but in this instance, his prior experiences lead him to dismiss despair in the knowledge of God's inevitable deliverance, he commends himself to God. When he sees the two giants, he prays for God's deliverance before engaging in battle.

Wigalois's attack on Marrien, the monstrous half-human, half-animal, is a matter of self-defense. As with the giantess and the dwarf, there is no time to negotiate a means of conflict resolution. This “vâlant” ‘devil’ (6976, 7022), covered with impervious scales, immediately begins throwing a magic fire at Wigalois that not even water can extinguish (6945-48, 6953-62). As Wigalois's horse catches fire and is consumed, Wigalois finds himself once more in a situation with no apparent solution; he cries out to God in his plight (6966-74). Wigalois discovers through wounding the creature that its blood douses the flames (6990-7018). The monster flees, and the narrator again attributes Wigalois's deliverance to God, as if Wigalois

²⁰⁴ ““Now help me, Lord, for I have need of it, so that the bright red flowers do not become still redder with my blood, so that the disloyal heathens do not laugh at my death.””

would not have discovered the means of killing Marrien and dousing the flames without God's intervention (7019-27).

It is significant that Marrien, a guardian of the adventure, is a creature to whose description the narrator is unable to give a name (6951-52, 7030-33). None of the adversaries Wigalois meets on his way to Glois is human. One of them, a dragon even Roaz fears, kills with its very breath (4691-98, 4722-35). Although the dragon is not one of Roaz's minions, Roaz's usurpation of Jorel's throne causes a state of evil in the land that results in a kind of general degradation, attested by the fact that the dragon terrorizes the area for the same number of years that Roaz rules (4691-96). The narrator describes the dwarf as a knight from Glois (6368) and both the dwarf and Marrien as guardians of the adventure (6595-56, 7030-33). The otherworldly nature of these adversaries may have to do with the fact that Roaz has sold himself to a devil in order to accomplish his usurpation of Korntin (3653-61). It expresses a loss of humanity that makes discussion, or any form of conflict resolution other than battle, impossible.

Wigalois expresses his faith that God will deliver him and that God is always on the side of the just (2919-23, 3004-05). This knowledge serves as a predictor of the outcome of the adventure; Roaz has wronged King Jorel, Jorel's wife, and his daughter. The medieval idea that justice will prevail through God's intervention in any joust or other form of battle is strongly evident throughout this narrative. It introduces a contradiction however, because it fails to explain why all the other knights who went on this adventure perished in the attempt. Since Roaz was clearly in the wrong, having even sold his soul to a devil to accomplish his evil ends, then any knight seeking to deliver Korntin back to Larie should have been able to defeat him. References to the failure of many knights who previously undertook the adventure are not meant

as evidence of God's fickle behavior, however, but to enhance the reader's perception of the danger of the adventure, Wigalois's prowess in overcoming it, and God's mercy in aiding him.

6. The wrath of God

Hebrews 10.31 states: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," and Wirnt provides the reader with a worthy example of this in his depiction of Christ's violent wrath against King Jorel (3851-83, 4619-78, 4815-21). This scene illustrates three things concerning the wrath of God. Firstly, there is no alternate means of conflict resolution against God. Jorel and his knights must serve their time in this pseudo-Purgatory until their souls are refined. Secondly, there is no dialogue to determine the severity of punishment for a given crime or the means of penance for sins committed as there sometimes was between a penitent knight and an earthly priest of the Middle Ages (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 175). Lastly, there is no reciprocal means of violence, nor in Jorel's case is there any desire for it, because he believes Christ's punishment to be just (*Wigalois* 4663-67). The divine punishment of Jorel is as violent as any knightly encounter in *Wigalois*, except that the sufferer meets it with passivity and acceptance.

The violence of Christ's wrath in punishing Jorel is reflective of the culture of asceticism in the Middle Ages with its real fear of the agonies of Purgatory (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 52). The king's purgatory-like suffering takes place on earth in the castle where he once ruled. The form of Jorel's punishment is significant. At the time when Wigalois enters the land, the spirit of the king still appears in the form of a leopard that daily burns up in the castle (3851-83, 4619-78, 4815-21). Fire was an important concept in the medieval concept of Purgatory; it was both punitive and rejuvenating (Le Goff 7-8, 10). The daily conflagration at Korntin gradually purified Jorel of sin. The type of "sin" that Jorel committed may help to explain the medieval preoccupation with penance as a means of mitigating purgatorial suffering, as Jorel seems to

have been completely ignorant of the fact that he was committing any sin (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 59). Even unknown sins caused acute suffering in Purgatory. According to the text the king incurred guilt by trusting Roaz von Glois (4716-34, 4833-35). Although the king's "sin" results entirely from Roaz's treachery, there is no indication that the ghost perceives Christ's wrath as unjust. In fact, the king states that he has justly earned Christ's punishment: "ich hân verdienet sînen slac / leider mir und sînen zorn" (4663-64).²⁰⁵ Ignorance of the forthcoming results of one's actions does not imply innocence in Middle High German literature. This is also evident in Wolfram's *Parzival*: first, when the hero inadvertently causes the death of his mother in setting out to become a knight (128.3-22, 499.19-30), and second, when he kills Ither, not knowing that he is his cousin, and ignorant of the precepts of knightly battle that would forbid the use of the *gabylôt* 'hunting spear' (154.27-155.16, 475.5-27). It is, nevertheless, difficult to understand why King Jorel's trust in Roaz incurred Christ's wrath. It may be tempting to compare this picture of Christ's wrath with the God of the Old Testament rather than with Jesus of the New Testament, but the only reference in the Old Testament to the punishment of souls after death occurs in the second book of Maccabees,²⁰⁶ a non-canonical book of the Bible, in which prayers for the dead are thought to have efficacy (Le Goff 41-42). According to Le Goff, the idea of Purgatory as a place developed sometime between 1150 and 1200 (4). Thus, it was still a relatively new idea by the time Wirnt von Grafenberg wrote *Wigalois*, which might explain why Jorel's punishment takes place on earth rather than in a separate location between earth and Heaven. The idea of an earthly Purgatory is not without precedence even in later manuscripts.

²⁰⁵ "I have to my misfortune earned his punishment and his wrath"

²⁰⁶ II Maccabees 12. 41-46.

According to Dante's fourteenth-century *Purgatorio*, Purgatory is a place on earth (Canto 1.24-30).

The reason for King Jorel's punishment may have more to do with a loss of honor than with punishment for sin in the sense that a modern reader might understand it. According to Kaeuper, loss of honor for a knight amounted to sin: "[A]nything leading to dishonor becomes sin, a moral and not merely a social blunder" (*Chivalry and Violence* 48). The medieval understanding of knighthood as a spiritual vocation means that Jorel's loss of honor as a knight, directly brought about by his trust of Roaz, earned the flames of Purgatory.²⁰⁷

Many medieval knights believed that they were God's instruments in meting out vengeance on evildoers. The Crusades comprise numerous examples of this – not only did the crusaders punish the pagans, who, the Christian knights believed, wrongfully occupied the Holy Land, but crusaders also earned forgiveness of sins, even the distinction of martyrdom, by doing so (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 102). This mode of thought is evident in *Wigalois* in the claim that God would take vengeance against Lion for killing King Amire in order to attain his wife, Liamere. When Wigalois states that God will not let Lion's act of murder go unpunished, it is clear that he intends with his fellow knights to be the instrument of God's wrath (10135-42).

The narrator also writes of God's wrath at the end of time (10265-99). No one dies because of love anymore as Liamere did, he claims, because no one truly loves (10243-57). He attributes this to the increasing depravity of mankind (10293-96). The word *gewalt* in this passage refers to God's power (10288).

²⁰⁷ The status of knighthood became a symbol of honor, so that even in the real world, medieval royalty called themselves knights (Bumke 68). It is no broad assumption that King Jorel was also a knight.

There is no possible choice in the form of conflict resolution against God. Jorel and his knights must endure their punishment until Christ's wrath is appeased. The comparison with purgatory is further justified by the fact that Jorel's punishment ends after Jorel suffers ten years of Christ's punishment (4819-21). The only means of conflict resolution is serving one's time in Purgatory until the soul is cleansed of sin.

7. Accidental violence

To speak of conflict resolution on the occasion of a friendly joust, such as the one between Wigalois and his potential host (1932-2009), would be a misappropriation of terms, for no conflict as such exists, or one might say that a conflict is simulated for the purpose of the game. The host in the aforementioned scene invites his opponent to a game of jousting. Accidental deaths did at times occur in such jousts, but they were not the intention. The conflict ensues when Wigalois accidentally kills his opponent. The imbalance generated by violence is evident when Nereja blames Wigalois: "[nu] nemt war / welch ein mort ir habt getân!" (2008-09).²⁰⁸ The three (Wigalois, the lady, and the dwarf) must hurry away before the Red Knight's retinue decides to attack them (2000-03). Unlike most other forms of conflict in *Wigalois*, the imbalance created by accidental killing does not generate further violence; further violence is averted when they flee the area.

8. The last battle

The final battle of the narrative is also the largest, involving thousands of knights, and the longest, lasting for a period of six weeks (10438-44, 10676-79, 11047-49). Wigalois and his six thousand knights take up battle against Lion's duchy, Namur (10442-44, 11173). This battle demonstrates a colossal means of conflict resolution, as though the punishment far exceeded the

²⁰⁸ "“Now see what sort of murder you have committed!””

crime. Though Lion committed his crime against King Amire and his wife Liamere alone, the besieging of the city Namur signifies communal blame and communal restitution. The reference to Wigalois's magnanimous forgiveness, too, assumes the guilt of the inhabitants of the city (11157-64). On a superficial level, the cause of this encounter is a quarrel between two men, Lion and Amire, over a woman, Liamere. The apparent excess in the attempt at conflict resolution is illusory, however, for two reasons. First, there is the fact that Amire, the victim of Lion's lance, is a king. This means that the conflict has much greater consequences than if Amire had been a less important individual.²⁰⁹ Avenging a king is of such great importance that some of the figures representing Amire in this great conflict are kings themselves, including, among others, Wigalois and two heathen kings from Asia (10074-76). A king is a figurehead of a nation, and, therefore, no other means of conflict resolution is attempted other than full battle until Lion's side is defeated, at which time the citizens of the city offer Wigalois thirty thousand gold marks as restitution for the harm caused, in spite of the fact that, according to the text, he has already forgiven them (11157-87). Interestingly, the text states that Wigalois forgives them for the harm caused to *him* rather than for harm to Amire and Liamere (11163-64). This brings up the second reason that the consequences of Lion's action are so extreme. Liamere and Wigalois's wife, Larie, are cousins (9869-82). According to the ancient Germanic laws of kindred ties, this makes Amire and Liamere part of Wigalois's kindred. As such, he must avenge Amire and Liamere. It also means that, by kindred extension, the harm done to Amire and Liamere, the relatives of Wigalois's wife, is harm done to Wigalois, so the citizens' offer of monetary restitution to Wigalois is understandable. Jones states that Christian doctrine never managed to convince knights that forgiveness was more honorable than vengeance (89). Jones

²⁰⁹ This argument also applies to Queen Liamere.

refers to Gurnemanz's prescription in Wolfram's *Parzival* that forgiveness only be granted when the perpetrator of the crime had not caused *herzen kumber* 'heartfelt injury' (Jones 89, *Parzival* 171.27-30). In *Wigalois*, the *herzen kumber* that Lion has caused Liamere is enough to move Wigalois and many others to action against Lion (10057-83). This *herzen kumber* also means that there is ultimately no forgiveness for Lion; in spite of Gawein's attempt to take him prisoner, he dies at Gawein's hand (11073-77, 11122-24). After the narrator's vivid description of Liamere's suffering and such a grand attempt at vengeance, it would, perhaps, have seemed strange to leave Lion alive at the end of the narrative.

9. Chapter conclusion

Medieval knights considered violence against other knights in certain instances and otherworldly creatures in nearly all circumstances to be an honorable, godly, and necessary component of knighthood. *Wigalois* continues this tradition without exception. At every opportunity, the eponymous hero ultimately chooses violence over any other form of conflict resolution. When Wigalois does attempt to reason with his opponent, as in the case of the Red Knight who stole a lady's beauty prizes, his attempt is fruitless, even ridiculed (2806-32). Had he persisted in this attempt, his words would quickly have been interpreted as a cowardly effort to avoid combat. On several occasions the narrator describes Wigalois's eagerness to fight, as if he craves the violent exercise of his knightly prowess (3320-28). For this reason, a damsel in distress is an especially favorable inducement to increase one's honor because the invariable solution to her distress is knightly battle on the part of the hero, so honor increases not only in battling the villain, but also in defending the defenseless woman, an act that even the clergy encouraged. Although no reference is made to Wigalois's desire to prove himself as a knightly warrior, other characters repeatedly express doubt concerning his ability to conquer the foe, both

in individual instances, and, ultimately, against Roaz. This means that Wigalois's inducements to undertake violence are two-fold: to increase his honor and to prove himself as a mature knight who is capable of all acts of chivalry, including slaying a formidable enemy. Throughout the narrative, God receives the credit for Wigalois's success, because God always sides with the just (2919-23). As Kaeuper suggests, the fight against evil is enough to warrant God's favor (*Holy Warriors* 3). There is no attempt to explain why Wigalois was successful in his numerous violent encounters, whereas so many other knights who fought on the side of justice failed against the same foes (3389-98). Wigalois represents an instance of knightly perfection. References to previous knights who failed against Wigalois's enemies serve to heighten the perception of Wigalois's prowess and his status as God's chosen instrument to punish Roaz, not to negate the medieval belief that God fights for the just. Rather, Wigalois confirms the belief that God always brings justice to the just and that God often uses violence to accomplish those ends.

Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*:

Spiritual and secular modes of conflict resolution

1. Introduction

Knights, as they were represented in Arthurian legends, were to strive for excellence both in prowess in battle, and adhere to courtly virtues, a value system at least partially inherited from Christianity. Like *Erec* and *Iwein*, *Parzival* represents a lack of the latter of these two values on the part of the eponymous hero. The value emphasized by the world of Munsalwaesche, a spiritually-oriented world devoted to serving the Grail, is that of compassion. Parzival loses his honor at Munsalwaesche for his failure to show compassion to Anfortas by asking the question that would release him from his agony. It is subsequent to this loss of honor, that King Arthur and his knights set out to look for Parzival, i.e., the Red Knight, in order to ask him to be a member of the Round Table. Cundry goes back and forth between the Arthurian world, Schastel marveile, and Munsalwaesche, and it is only when Cundry finds Parzival in the company of King Arthur and his noble knights, that his failure at Munsalwaesche affects his reputation in the Arthurian world, effectively destroying his *êre* until he can again find his way to Munsalwaesche and undo the damage he has done.

One might have thought these two value systems were indivisible, but Cundry's accusation exposes a dichotomy between them, for some of the company at the Round Table seem much less affected by Cundry's words than they might be; it is subsequent to her revelations that they say:

“nu sol ein ieslîch Bertenoy
sich vröun daz uns der helt ist komen,
dâ prîs mit wârheit ist vernomen

an im und ouch an Gahmurete.

reht werdekeit was sîn gewete.” (325.30-326.4)²¹⁰

Rather than banishing Parzival, the nobles around him attempt to comfort him after Cundry's violent verbal attack (326.11-14). Just as Iwein is still able to attain honor as a warrior in Hartmann's narrative even after he has lost honor in failing to show *mâze* between knightly violence and his relationship to Laudine,²¹¹ Parzival is still honored by the Knights of the Round Table for his deeds of prowess. They are saddened when he decides to leave (331.3-10, 332.19-30). It is clear, however, that Parzival has lost at least some of the high regard that he had enjoyed before Cundry's appearance; he believes he must retrieve his honor and happiness at Munsalwaesche (330.8-30).

Parzival is so disheartened by his failure at Munsalwaesche that he rejects God at the very moment before he sets out to find the Grail and correct his mistake (332.1-14). His search for the Grail and his simultaneous rejection of God are incompatible however. Several years of victorious battles prove futile until he meets the hermit Trevrizent,²¹² who makes it clear to him that he must reconcile himself to God (460.19-30, 465.11-467.10). Parzival still defends his life, hoping to attain God's favor and the Grail because of his faithfulness in participating in knightly combat (472.1-11). The meeting with Trevrizent marks the turning point in Parzival's fortunes

²¹⁰ ““Now, all Britons should rejoice that the hero has come, because it can be seen that he possesses honor just as Gachmuret, did. True valor was ever his companion.””

²¹¹ See above, pp. 105-06.

²¹² Trevrizent was a knight, who became a hermit, renouncing knighthood and turning to God. He represents the belief many knights maintained: that their special vocation gave them the right to approach God without the mediation of a priest (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 56-57).

however, for though he failed in showing compassion, he regains his honor before he meets his uncle, Anfortas, a second time, as evinced by Cundry's plea for forgiveness for denigrating him at the Round Table (779.20-26). Parzival's success in regaining his honor and finding the Grail are dependent on his spiritual redemption rather than on knightly prowess. It is noteworthy, therefore, that, in the end, Trevrizent brings the dichotomy between redemption and knightly prowess full circle by suggesting, without basing it on any argument other than his success in reaching his goal, that Parzival has indeed attained the Grail through violence (798.24-27).

2. The violence of *minne*

Just as Hartmann does in *Iwein* (1537-50), Wolfram writes of *Minne* in terms of violence (291.5-292.4; 407.2-8). The narrator complains that neither shield nor sword is able to defend against *Vrou Minne* (292.29). No one is safe against her:

ir sît gewaldec ob der wer.
bêde ûf erde unt in dem mer
waz entrinnet iuwer m criege,
ez vlieze oder vliege? (293.1-4)²¹³

Vrou Minne has already conquered Parzival (290.29-30), who, though he is a warrior, is powerless in her hands:

Vrou Minne, ir tâtet ouch gewalt,
dô Parzivâl der degen balt
durch iuch von sînen wîzen schiet,
als im sîn triuwe dô geriet. (293.5-8)²¹⁴

²¹³ 'You overpower one's defenses. What can outrun your attack either on earth or in the sea, whether it swims or flies?'

According to the narrator, Lady Love leaves Parzival defenseless (294.26-30). She has already killed Condwiramurs's brother, Kardeiz (293.11-13), who serves as an example for the narrator; since one has to pay such a high price for love, he is glad to have received nothing from *Vrou Minne* (293.14-16). The *gewalt* of *minne* is to blame for Anfortas's suffering; Trevrizent explains that youth strengthens the power of love (478.8-16). *Minne* likewise overpowers Gawan and the narrator says that she should be ashamed of herself for exercising her *gewalt* over him when he is wounded (684.8-685.4; 587.2-8). Gawan's cousin Ilinot found his death in love service to a lady (585.29-586.11). The narrator states that everyone in Gawan's family had felt the force of *minne* (586.28-587.1). Gawan is helpless in her power (593.19-20).

3. Love service

When Parzival rejects God, he tells Gawan that, when he fights, he should trust not in God but in a lady (332.1-14). This is a form of *Frauendienst*, which Lexer translates as "das dienen um den liebeslohn einer dame" 'service undertaken to earn the reward of a lady's love.' According to J. W. Thomas, Book VI of *Parzival* ends with the suggestion that *Frauendienst* is a primary concern of Wolfram's romance (Thomas 419). Thomas's reference can only refer to *Parzival* 337.1-22, in which the narrator claims that he has spoken better of ladies in the current work than in an earlier poem that he wrote to a particular lady. The narrator supports his claim with examples from the romance, such as his sympathy for Frau Jeschute when she appears in disgraceful circumstances in Parzival's second encounter with her (256.12-257.32). He also states that, if a woman should love him only because of his writings and not because of his knighthood, he would consider her of weak understanding (115.11-14). Whether or not

²¹⁴ 'Lady Love, you did violence to Parzival, the brave warrior, who lost his senses because of you as so directed by his loyalty.'

Frauendienst can be considered a primary concern of the work, it is certainly a thread that runs throughout *Parzival* and, since it is closely linked to violence, it is also an important aspect of this study.

As has already been seen with Erec and Enite, a woman's beauty has the ability to lend knights strength in battle (*Erec* 935-39).²¹⁵ When Gachmuret fights at Kanvoleis, it is not a lady's beauty that spurs him to prowess, but his own love and loyalty for a lady (*Parzival* 78.23-24). The object of his loyalty seems to be Ampflise, the Queen of France, rather than Belakane. It is certainly not Herzeloyde, as Gachmuret objects to marrying her, based first on the fact that he is already married, and second, on the technicality that, due to the events at the *vesperie* 'knightly games the day before the tournament,'²¹⁶ the actual tournament never takes place (94.5-96.5). It is likely that Gachmuret's love and loyalty refer to Ampflise, because he receives a love letter from her, requesting that he fight in the battle at Kanvoleis as her knight (76.1-77.10), and it is after Gachmuret reads this letter that the text states:

aldâ wart von Gahmurete
geleistet Ampflîsen bete,
daz er ir ritter waere:
ein brief sagt im daz maere.

²¹⁵ Another example occurs when Antikonie's beauty inspires bravery in Gawan and the two defend themselves with a rather large chess board and chess pieces (*Parzival* 408.16-410.12).

²¹⁶ Contrary to what the term *vesperie* would suggest, such games did not always take place in the evening (Bumke 352). The *vesperie* at Kanvoleis takes place in the afternoon (*Parzival* 68.24-29).

âvoy nu wart er lâzen an.

ob minne und ellen in des man?

grôz liebe und starkiu triuwe

sîne craft im vrunt al niuwe. (78.17-24).²¹⁷

The love and loyalty to which the above text refers, taken in the context of the love letter, can only pertain to Ampflise. Furthermore, when Gachmuret's marriage to Herzeloide becomes inevitable, he sends a message to Ampflise: "ob mir alle crône waeren bereit, / ich hân nâch ir mîn hoehte leit" (98.5-6).²¹⁸

Gachmuret's marriage to Belakane and the letter from Ampflise are two aspects of a constellation of issues that complicate his fight at the tournament. Herzeloide has promised her hand and her lands to the knight who wins the tournament (60.15-17). Consequently, fighting in the tournament at Kanvoleis constitutes a form of love service in honor of Herzeloide. Not all of the knights who fight at the tournament aspire to the promised reward; some of the knights are too poor to expect to marry the queen (70.7-12). Gachmuret, however, is a rich nobleman and his participation in the tournament brings the expectation that he fights for the prize. Consequently, when he fights as Ampflise's knight, it reveals a conflict of interest; Gachmuret does not want to marry Herzeloide, but only to fight in the tournament. When he wins the *vesperie*, however, Herzeloide has a claim on him, as evinced by the trial that takes place to decide the issue (95.28-96.5).

²¹⁷ 'Gachmuret fulfilled the request that Ampflise wrote in her letter and fought as her knight. Now, look how he fights! Is it love or mighty bravery that urges him on? Great love and powerful loyalty made his strength ever new.'

²¹⁸ "“Even if I ruled every kingdom, my greatest longing would still be for her.””

Wolfram reveals the dire consequences possible in the tradition of knightly love service – knightly violence undertaken in order to earn a lady’s affections. Gachmuret, who wants to pursue something higher than mere riches (9.23), states: “ich var durch mîne werdekeit / nâch ritterschaft in vremdiu lant” (11.6-7).²¹⁹ His mother equates “ritterschaft” with *hôhe minne* ‘lofty love’: “sit du nach hôher minne / wendest dienest und muot” (11.10-11).²²⁰ This idea is confirmed after Gachmuret knocks twenty-four knights from their horses at Patelamunt, taking three princes prisoner, thus winning the war against Belakane (41.9-27, 45.14-17). His reward is Belakane’s love, and kingship over the land (44.18-30, 49.20-23). Belakane, not inappropriately, honors Gachmuret with this reward; according to Geoffrey de Charney, war is the most honorable of knightly forms of battle (7.9-12).

The first time we read of a knight who undertakes love service for a lady in *Parzival*, it is immediately associated with his death:

die clageten al gelîche
 Isenharten, der den lîp
 in dienste vlôs umbe ein wîp.
 des twang in Belacâne,
 diu süeze valsches âne.
 daz si im ir minne nie gebôt,

²¹⁹ “I travel to foreign lands, seeking knightly deeds in order to increase my honor”

²²⁰ ““since you direct your thoughts and deeds to lofty love””

des lag er nâch ir minne tôt. (16.4-10)²²¹

Isenhardt had been so determined to impress his beloved that he fought without armor, but met a violent death in his pursuit of honor (27.11-28.3). The scenario is complicated still further by the fact that Isenhardt's relatives seek vengeance against Belakane for Isenhardt's death (16.11-14). The King of Scotland, Friedebrand, who is Isenhardt's uncle, fights against Belakane: "zornlîche mit gewalt" 'wrathfully with violence' (26.5).

By means of violence, a knight could prove his worth and attain the hand of a lady in marriage. This is why the tournament at Kanvoleis takes place, where Queen Herzeloyde offers herself and her two lands as reward to the victor (60.9-17). The need to prove oneself could also prevent the union of a knight and a lady, as it did with Sigune and Schionatulander. Sigune laments her behavior:

"ich hete cranke sinne,
daz ich im niht minne gap:
des hât der sorgen urhap
mir vröude verschrôten:
nu minne ich in alsô tôten." (141.20-24)²²²

Although Sigune expresses her regret for not rewarding Schionatulander earlier, she was behaving within the codes of chivalry to demand that he prove himself worthy of her through

²²¹ 'Everyone mourned for Isenhardt, who lost his life in knightly service to a lady. The sweet, virtuous Belakane drove him to his death. Love for her brought him death, because she denied him her love.'

²²² "'I was foolish enough to withhold my love from him. That was the beginning of sorrow that destroyed my happiness. Now, I love him in death.'"

knightly violence. Parzival is not yet ready to engage in love service when he arrives at Gurnemanz's castle. The knight who removed his armor for him states that Parzival's behavior is so bad that he could not possibly convince a lady to accept his knightly service (164.29-165.1). After Gurnemanz trains him in knightly behavior, however, the introduction to Gurnemanz's daughter, Liaze, fails to bring about the desired results of marriage between her and Parzival, because Parzival wants to accomplish many knightly deeds before he marries (176.30-177.4). He wants to be able to seek Liaze's hand according to the dictates of knighthood – through proof of his knightly prowess in battle (178.29-179.3). As Sigune's example illustrates, ladies wanted a potential suitor to prove his worth in battle before giving him her hand,²²³ but Parzival shows that this desire could stem from the knight rather than the lady.

Parzival's defeat of Kingrun, Clamide's seneschal, becomes an act of love service whether or not he intended it as such; Condwiramurs asks him to become her husband (200.6-9). Condwiramurs and her entire army of relatives, princes, and followers became the victims of violence when she rejected Clamide's attempt to court her (183.4-184.21). Condwiramurs planned to throw herself from a high tower, lest Clamide be allowed to take her as his wife – the goal of the violence that had already wiped out half her army (194.21-195.26). Consequently, Parzival set out to defend Condwiramurs, but the fact that he was not motivated by the hope of the lady's love reward is evinced by the fact that the two do not consummate their marriage until the third night (201.19-203.10). Clamide does not accept Kingrun's defeat as the end of the war, however, and Parzival must continue his knightly service to Condwiramurs by helping to defend the palace (204.18-206.4, 207.6-208.22). Upon learning that Condwiramurs is married, Clamide

²²³ Obie's rejection of Meljanz also illustrates a lady's demand that her suitor prove himself in battle (344.15-18, 345.26-346.2).

challenges Parzival to a joust to determine the end of the battle between the two armies (209.15-210.2).

Gawan undertakes an innocent form of love service when the child Obilot decides to make him her knight (352.23-26). Obilot's father first asks Gawan to fight in his army, but Gawan declines (366.3-18. 366.19-367.2). A quarrel between Obie and Obilot arises when Obie insists that Gawan is a merchant (352.12-24). Because of this, Obilot asks Gawan to be her knight and carry her name into the fray, promising him love's reward (368.22-370.7). Gawan knows that Obilot is much too young to reward him in this way, but her words move him to violence (370.8-30). There is no indication here that Gawan was defending the defenseless. The narrator contradicts the idea of obligation by stating that she found her way into Gawan's heart (370.18-21). Gawan's words to Obilot and her playmate express how the relationship between a knight and his lady should function:

“kan iuwer jugent sus twingen,
welt irz inz alter bringen,
iuwer minne lêrt noch ritters hant
dâ von ie schilt gein sper verswant.” (372.9-12).²²⁴

The word *twingen* ‘to force/urge,’ which refers to Gawan himself, suggests that the child causes Gawan to feel compelled by her words, behavior, and/or person to do her bidding. Although other knights have fought for their ladies,²²⁵ this sense of compulsion is only otherwise represented in the literature in the presence of Lady Minne, against whose violent ministrations

²²⁴ ““Since you can force a knight's hand in your youth, if you continue thus in your adulthood, your love will teach many a knight's hand that broke shield with lance.””

²²⁵ See for example *Wigalois* 7904-40.

the knight is helpless (*Iwein* 1537-70). Gawan gives Obilot to understand with the above excerpt that her power over him by means of *minne* has procured his services. The innocence of the exchange between the child and the knight lies only in the reward of love; though the child cannot reward Gawan as a lady, the violence that the exchange produces is real. Gawan explains to her that she is too young to reward him (370.13-17), but Obilot maintains that her love will sustain him in battle:

“mîn minne sol iu vride bern,
gelückes vor der angest wern,
daz iuwer ellen niht verbirt
irn wert iuch vaste unz an den wirt.” (371.9-12)²²⁶

Gawan gives into the game, declaring his desire for her love and support in exchange for his knightly service (371.17-20). Thus, the posture of love service produces the desired violent outcome.

Gawan embarks on a much more serious kind of love service when he meets Orgeluse, who, upon hearing his greeting and praise of her, immediately scorns his intentions (508.14-510.14). Gawan responds by describing the violence of the emotions that her beauty has occasioned:

“mîn ougen sint des herzen vâ:
die hânt an iuwerem lîbe ersehen,
daz ich mit wârheit des muoz jehen
daz ich iuwer gevangen bin.

²²⁶ ““My love shall bring you security and good fortune in battle, so that your courage does not fail and you will defend yourself down to the last.””

kêrt gein mir wîplîchen sin.
 swie es iuch habe verdrozzen,
 ir habt mich in geslozzen:
 nu loeset oder bindet.
 des willen ir mich vindet,
 het ich iuch swâ ich wolte,
 den wunsch ich gerne dolte.” (510.11-26)²²⁷

Orgeluse warns Gawan that he will not succeed in attaining her love, but states: “Ich wiste gerne ob ir der sît, / der durch mich getorste lîden strît” (511.1-2)²²⁸ Gawan’s answer illustrates the courtly expectation that love service involve violence:

“wer mac minne ungedienet hân?
 muoz ich iu daz kûnden,
 der treit si hin mit sünden.
 swem ist ze werder minne gâch,
 dâ hoeret dienst vor unde nâch.” (511.17-16)²²⁹

²²⁷ ““My eyes bring my heart into danger. They have seen your beauty and in truth made me your prisoner. Show me womanly compassion. As much as it may aggravate you, you have locked me (in your heart). Now free me or bind me. You will find that, if I had you where I wanted you, I would gladly endure the fulfillment of my desire.””

²²⁸ ““I would like to see if you would dare to suffer through battle for me.””

²²⁹ ““Who wants love without earning it? I assure you, he who attains it in this way sins. Whoever longs for worthy love must serve both before and after he has attained it.””

Gawan is determined to earn her love; he is dissuaded neither by her words nor when a third party warns him not to serve her (513.24-514.20). Orgeluse insults Gawan:

“west willekomen, ir gans.
 nie man sô grôze tumpheit dans,
 ob ir mich dienstes welt gewern.
 ôwê wie gerne irz möht verbern!”²³⁰

Orgeluse is not easily pleased in matters of love service. In spite of the fact that Gawan is victorious in defeating Clinschor’s magic bed and the lion among other challenges at Schastel marveile and defeats two knights in front of the fortress, Orgeluse still scorns him (598.16-599.13). Orgeluse finally capitulates only after Gawan succeeds in taking a wreath of branches from a tree protected by the man who killed her husband, Cidegast, and then abducted her (603.26-29, 606.1-13, 611.20-30).

Orgeluse is an example of a woman who has become embittered because of the violence of one knight, Gramoflanz, to the extent that she will reward the attentions of none. She uses love service purely to avenge herself against him because she believes she can only assuage her grief through revenge (615.27-616.10, 618.1-18). As a result, Anfortas receives his terrible wound in love service to her and eventually swears off love service entirely (616.11-617.3, 819.29-820.4, 823.25-26). Having failed in this venture, and hoping to destroy Gramoflanz, Orgeluse makes a deal with Clinschor, giving him valuable treasure in exchange for the understanding that she would offer her love to whoever survived the adventure at Schastel marveile and that, if this knight should accept her love, the treasure would be hers again

²³⁰ ““Welcome, you idiot. Never was there such a bigger fool than you, since you want to serve me. Alas, if only you would desist!””

(617.17-30). She sends many knights to Gramoflanz to fight with him, even allowing them to serve her for love, which she never promised (618.10-18). Only Gawan's love, persistence, and willingness to accomplish whatever she asks overcome her animosity toward him and, eventually, toward Gramoflanz (723.1-10, 727.29-728.14).

4. Violence against women

The idea of *Frauendienst* or, as it is also called, *Minnedienst* 'love service,' began among the troubadours in southern France in the early twelfth century and is closely connected with knighthood and violence (Borries 130-31). One negative aspect of *Frauendienst* was that it could mean the death of the knight who served his lady. This means that *Frauendienst* could have both direct and indirect consequences, as could any form of knightly violence that affects the relationship of a knight and his lady; knightly violence resulting in the direct consequence of the death of a lady's potential suitor or husband causes indirect violence against the lady with its own set of dire consequences. For example, when Gachmuret's brother, Galoes, dies in a joust, the queen, for whose love he served, dies of grief (80.14-81.4).

Gachmuret's last knightly encounter, in which he battles the kings of Babylon, Ipomidon and Pompejus, results in indirect violence against Herzeloide. In this battle, Gachmuret comes to the aid of his former lord, the Baruc of Bagdad, whom the Babylonian kings have attacked (101.21-29). When Herzeloide hears the news that Gachmuret did not survive this war, the text states: "des kom vrou Herzeloide in nôt, / si viel hin unversunnen" (105.6-7).²³¹ The narrator states that Herzeloide wrestles with death (109.6), evidence of the indirect violence that Gachmuret's death engenders. Unlike the queen whom Galoes served, however, Herzeloide does not die of grief. According to H. B. Wilson, Gachmuret and his son, Parzival, are, from

²³¹ 'Herzeloide was so greatly afflicted by this that she fell unconscious.'

Herzeloyde's perspective, two persons in one (183). The text confirms this idea, for, when Herzeloyde wakes from unconsciousness, she states:

“ich was vil junger danne er,
und bin sîn muoter und sîn wîp.
ich trage alhie doch sînen lîp
und sînes verhes sâmen.” (*Parzival* 109.24-27)²³²

The knowledge that she carries Gachmuret's child keeps Herzeloyde from death, for it is one of her first thoughts upon waking, and she states: “hât got getriuwe sinne, / sô lâz er mir in ze vrûhte komen” (109.30-110.1).²³³ It is clear from Herzeloyde's prayer a few lines later that she would wish to do herself bodily harm, as Belearé did in *Wigalois* (4867-901), were it not that she carries Gachmuret's child:

“mir sol got senden
die werden vruht von Gahmurete.
daz ist mînes herzen bete.
got wende mich sô tumber nôt:
daz waer Gahmurets ander tôt,
ob ich mich selben slüege;
die wîle ich bî mir trüege
daz ich von sîner minne enpfîenc,

²³² “I was much younger than he, yet I am both mother and wife to him. I carry the seed of his life in my body.”

²³³ “If God is loyal, let him allow me to bring him to fruition.”

der mannes triuwe an mir begienc.” (110.14-22)²³⁴

Herzeloyde reacts to Gachmuret’s death by trying to protect her child. She prays for the fortitude to abstain from violence against herself in her grief in order to protect him, and, after the child’s birth, she hides him away from the court, so that he may not hear of knighthood (112.19-20). The selfishness inherent in keeping Parzival in ignorance has caused many readers to question Herzeloyde’s character and the excessive nature of her love for her son (Wilson 183-84). Wilson believes that the reader is meant to see through the narrator’s praise of Herzeloyde (*Parzival* 116.15-117.2) and recognize the lack of moderation in her actions. He points out the narrator’s comment: “der site vuor angestlîche vart” ‘This proved to be a hazardous course’ (117.29). It is true that she exhibits *unmâze* in her grief (as do all women who express grief in Arthurian legends) and in the manner in which she attempts to protect Parzival, but Herzeloyde provides a rare case of a woman who continues to live, faithful to her knight, after his death:

ein nebel was ir diu sunne:

si vlôch der werlde wunne.

ir was gelîch naht unt der tac:

ir herze niht wan jâmers pflac. (117.3-6)²³⁵

²³⁴ ““May God allow me to bear the noble fruit of Gachmuret. That is the prayer of my heart. God turn me from foolish acts of desperation. It would be Gachmuret’s second death if I were to strike myself while I carry inside my body that which I received from his love, who was loyal to me.””

²³⁵ ‘The sun was a fog to her. She fled worldly pleasures. Night and day were as one to her. Her heart knew nothing but misery.’

In the four works examined in this dissertation, Herzeloide's niece, Sigune, is the only other woman who fulfills both of these criteria: she continues to live and she is faithful to her beloved, deceased knight. Indeed, Herzeloide's actions in removing herself from courtly society are reflected later in Sigune's actions in becoming a hermitess after the death of Schionatulander:

er vant ein clôsnaerinne,
 diu durch die gotes minne
 ir magetuom unt ir vröude gap.
 wîplîcher sorgen urhap
 ûz ir herzen blüete alniuwe,
 unt doch durch alte triuwe. (435.13-18)²³⁶

The narrators of Middle High German Arthurian legends do not censure women for their lack of *mâze* in expressing grief; rather, they praise the loyalty that gives rise to such expressions. Enite alone is ordered in censorious tones to desist from grieving, but the man who demands this is Oringles, the villain who insists that Enite marry him before her husband is even buried (*Erec* 6324-41, 6447-506). It is Oringles, however, rather than Enite, who is the object of the narrator's scorn (6357). When Belear grieves, Wigalois asks her why she is so distressed, comforts her with promises of help, and stops her from beating herself, but he does not criticize her lack of *mâze* as, in essence, Oringles does Enite (*Wigalois* 4876-948). Jones points out that, where women love, they are permitted to demonstrate the overwhelming power of that love through forgiveness, even in circumstances of heartfelt injury in which a knight would be

²³⁶ 'He [Parzival] found a hermitess, who had, for the sake of God's love, remained a virgin and given up all happiness. Her suffering sprang ever anew from her heart because of her long-maintained loyalty.'

dishonored by showing forgiveness (90). Ginover forgives Parzival for the grief he caused her in killing Ither (310.26-311.3). A similar double standard between knights and ladies is evident when women fail to show *mâze* in grief. The narrator of *Parzival* esteems *triuwe* over *mâze* in such situations; he considers Lunete's advice to Laudine in *Iwein* to accept another man as her husband after King Ascalon's death to be precipitous (*Parzival* 253.10-17, 436.10). Instead, he praises loyalty in women whose husbands have died: "dar nâch tuo als siz lêre: / behelt si dennoch êre, / sine treit dehein sô liechten cranz, / gêt si durch vröude an den tanz" (436.19-22).²³⁷ That is why the narrator praises Sigune's loyalty: "al irdisch triuwe was ein wint, / wan die man an ir lîbe sach" (249.24-25).²³⁸

Herzeloide's attempt to protect Parzival by keeping silent about knighthood only succeeds in delaying the inevitable. Her last effort to prevent him from dying by the sword as his father did involves giving him a wretched horse and dressing him in fool's clothes in the hope that he will be ridiculed and beaten up, and thus, be forced to return home (126.19-29, 144.23-27). Herzeloide obviously does not regard this potential act of violence with the horror with which she envisions Parzival as a knight, but her care to ensure his failure is useless because, even if he had returned, she would not have survived to witness it. The violence that Gachmuret's death caused Herzeloide²³⁹ becomes evident when Parzival departs; she only

²³⁷ 'Afterward let her do as she is guided. If she retains (their) honor nonetheless, she would not wear so brilliant a crown if she were to go with joy to the dance.'

²³⁸ 'All earthly loyalty was nothing in comparison to hers.'

²³⁹ Once Belakane had given birth to her son, Feirefiz, she, too, died at the loss of Gachmuret (750.19-26).

endured as long as Gachmuret lived on in her son and she was able to have him in her presence daily – literally, as long as she could see him:

dô si ir sun niht langer sach

.....

dô viel diu vrouwe valsches laz

ûf die erde, aldâ si jâmer sneit

sô daz si ein sterben niht vermeit. (128.18-22)²⁴⁰

The past and potential violence of knighthood turns a son's departure into an act of unintentional violence against his mother.

It can be argued that Parzival is innocent of his mother's death, but King Jorel's divine punishment for misplaced trust shows that ignorance is not an acceptable excuse in Middle High German Arthurian legends for sinning against God (*Wigalois* 3666-732, 4619-67).²⁴¹ Because of Ither's and Herzeloide's deaths, the hermit Trevrizent accuses Parzival of causing such misery that God must have pity on him (475.19-76.13). Though Parzival unknowingly murdered his blood relative, Ither, Trevrizent warns that God has not forgotten Parzival's sin (499.14-16). Trevrizent counts both Parzival's mother's death and Ither's as grave sins for which Parzival must do penance (499.20-30).

Because Herzeloide has hidden not only knighthood, but all things courtly, from Parzival, she must impart to him in one night all the good advice that she has not given him over the course of his childhood (127.11-28.10). Herzeloide's advice proves to be so superficial that

²⁴⁰ 'When she could no longer see her son . . . , misery overcame the loyal lady, so that she fell to the earth and died.'

²⁴¹ See the chapter on *Wigalois*, pp. 173-76.

it is harmful, and the result of much folly on Parzival's part. Her advice concerning women is especially injurious, because Parzival takes her recommendations quite literally:

“swa du guotes wîbes vingerlîn
 mügest erwerben unt ir gruoz,
 daz nim: ez tuot dir kumbers buoz.
 du solt ze ir kusse gâhen
 und ir lîp vast umbevâhen:
 daz gît gelücke und hôhen muot,
 ob si kiusche ist unde guot.” (127.26-28.2)²⁴²

Parzival's subsequent treatment of Jeschute, Orilus's wife, is certainly not what Herzeloyde had in mind. He enters her tent while she sleeps alone and, as soon as he sees the ring on her finger, he jumps onto the bed and begins wrestling with her to attain it, not forgetting to take the kiss that his mother suggested (129.27-31.21). Herzeloyde provided Parzival with information concerning knightly behavior for which he lacked the necessary context to understand. In so doing, she becomes the unwitting cause of violence against Jeschute.

When Orilus returns, Parzival is gone, as is Jeschute's honor, for Orilus is determined to punish her for having “ein ander âmîs” ‘another lover’ (133.10). The next section reads like a litany of Orilus's conquests in battle, all of which he now believes were in vain, because he is convinced that Jeschute has not been faithful to him (133.29-35.6). The reader learns, for example, that Orilus has fought twice against Erec, and that it was Orilus who killed

²⁴² ““If you can gain a woman's ring and her greeting, then take them; they drive away all sad thoughts. You should not hesitate to kiss her and embrace her body. From that you will receive happiness and a noble mind if she is chaste and virtuous.””

Gachmuret's brother Galoes. Orilus engaged in these violent acts in love service to Jeschute. Jeschute asks her husband to hear her defense before he exercises his right to punish her:

“ir sît getriuwe unde wîs,
und ouch wol sô gewaldic mîn,
ir muget mir geben hôhen pîn.
ir sult ê mîn gerihte nemen.
.....
ir mugt mir dannoch vüegen nôt” (136.12-17)²⁴³

Though Jeschute's punishment is undeserved, Orilus has authority over her as her husband; he may punish her as he sees fit. Orilus declares that he will no longer do anything in his wife's honor (135.28-30). Thus, rather than using his knightly prowess to serve her, Orilus turns the tables of courtly love service and anticipates vengeance against his wife:

“ich ensol niht mêr erwarmen
an iuweren blanken armen,
dâ ich etswenn durch minne lac
manegen wünneclîchen tac.
ich sol velwen iuweren rôten munt,
[und] iuweren ougen machen roete kunt.
ich sol iu vröude entêren,
[und] iuwer herze siuften lêren.” (136.1-8)²⁴⁴

²⁴³ ““You are loyal and wise and you also have authority over me; you can punish me severely. Listen to my justification first. . . . You can punish me afterward.””

Orilus is as good as his word; when Parzival meets Jeschute again, more than a year has passed during which Jeschute has had to suffer her husband's disapprobation (139.20-22). Since Orilus refused her any other dress but the one in which he found her in the tent (136.29-30), that same dress, when Parzival meets her again, is a mass of rags knotted together (257.14).

Jeschute's horse, emaciated as Orilus promised it would be (137.2) bears testament to Orilus's abuse:

ir pfärt gein kumber was verselt:
 man hete im wol durch hût gezelt
 elliu sîniu rippe gar.
 als ein harm ez was gevar.
 ein bästîn halfter lac dar an.
 unz ûf den huof swanc im diu man.
 sîn ougen tief, die gruoben wît.
 ouch was der vrouwen runzît
 vertwâlet unde vertrecket,
 durch hunger dicke erwecket.
 ez was durre als ein zunder.
 sîn gên daz was wunder:
 wande ez reit ein vrouwe wert

²⁴⁴ “I will not warm myself in your white arms anymore as I have done during many a joyful day for the sake of love. I will turn your red lips pale and make your eyes turn red. I will destroy your happiness and teach your heart to sigh.”

diu selten kunrierte pfert. (256.17-30)²⁴⁵

The lady's horse is also unshod (256.12-15). The neglect of her horse is a form of indirect violence against Jeschute. The horse has done nothing to deserve Orilus's scorn, but, as it is Jeschute's horse, it must suffer, so that Jeschute cannot have the distinction of riding a beautiful, groomed mare.

The horse, as well as Jeschute's dress, are signs of Orilus's attempt to shame her. As she weeps before Parzival, she tries to cover her naked skin with hands and arms (259.2-4). Her statement that she is no longer worthy of Orilus attests to the effect of his treatment of her:

“ich was etswenne sîn wîp:

nune möhte mîn vertwâlet lîp

des heldes dierne niht gesîn:

sus tuot er gein mir zürnen schîn.” (259.23-26)²⁴⁶

Jeschute is afraid of Orilus and afraid for Parzival. She does not dare to accept the cloak that Parzival offers her for fear of Orilus's reaction, but tells him to ride away as far as possible in order to preserve them both from death (259.8-12). Her warning that six knights like Parzival

²⁴⁵ ‘Her horse was in a miserable condition; one could have counted all its ribs beneath its skin. It was a white horse. It had a halter of bast. Its mane hung to its hooves. Its eyes were deeply sunken. The lady's horse was weak and broken down. Because of hunger it scarcely slept. It was as dry as a cinder. It was a wonder that it could still walk, especially since it was ridden by a noble lady who knew nothing of the care of horses.’

²⁴⁶ “‘I was once his wife. Now, in this pathetic state, I am not worthy to be his servant girl. He is terribly angry with me.’”

would have great toil in fighting against Orilus (259.20-21) only reinforces Parzival's determination to fight him:

“wer ist hie mit iuwerem man?
 wan vlühe ich nu durch iuvern rât,
 daz diuhte iuch lîhte ein missetât.
 swenne ich vliehen lerne,
 sô stirbe ich als gerne.” (259.28-60.2)²⁴⁷

Jeschute tries once more to dissuade Parzival from fighting Orilus (260.3-5). Parzival's only reply is to prepare for battle (260.12-15).

There is a consistent theme of selflessness surrounding Jeschute. She would rather die by someone else's hands than Orilus's, so that no one could blame him for the deed (136.18-22). The narrator states that it is not her own unhappiness that causes her to weep, but that of her husband, and this causes her so much anguish that death would have been less painful (137.20-26). Jeschute's selflessness can only partially be explained by her unwavering love for Orilus in spite of his treatment of her, for, when she warns Parzival to ride away to spare them both from death, she claims to be more concerned for his life than hers (259.13-14). When the two knights joust against each other, Jeschute wrings her hands: “si vröuden ellende / gunde enweder helde schaden” (262.28-29).²⁴⁸

Both Orilus and Parzival want to win the battle (263.1, 265.2-3), but, remarkably, it is in Jeschute's best interest that her husband lose. Women are not commonly happy about the defeat

²⁴⁷ ““Who is there with your husband? If I fled as you suggest, you would think yourself that I was guilty of misconduct. I would rather die than learn to flee.””

²⁴⁸ ‘The miserable lady wished harm to neither of the heroes.’

of their husbands. Mabonagrín's wife, for example, is quite upset when Erec bests her husband in a sword fight (*Erec* 9308-15, 9691-98). Jeschute, however, has much to gain by her husband's defeat in battle: "vroun Jeschûten wart der gruoze / mit swertes schimpfe aldâ bejagt, / mit heldes handen unverzagt" (*Parzival* 263.24-26).²⁴⁹ The medieval belief in God's intervention certainly plays a role in this battle. Orilus believes that he should be able to do whatever he sees fit to Jeschute without anyone interfering: "ob [der] man des wîbes hât gewalt" 'because the man has authority over his wife' (264.19). Parzival knows, however, that Jeschute suffers innocently, therefore, he intercedes: "Parzivâl der degen balt / Oriluses hulde gerte / vroun Jeschûten mit dem swerte" (264.20-22).²⁵⁰ In spite of the fact that the narrator conveys his sympathy with both perspectives (264.25), it is suggestive that it is Parzival who wins the battle (265.11-19); if God intercedes in battles to see that justice is done, as we have seen in other narratives, then Orilus must have been at least partially in the wrong (in the narrator's perspective) for the way he treated Jeschute. With Orilus in his power, Parzival demands that he make amends for his treatment of Jeschute and grant her his favor, or he will die (265.20-23). In fact, Parzival is nearly forced to carry out his threat to kill him before Orilus gives in (265.25-68.6). Orilus offers him land and his service as a vassal rather than reconcile with Jeschute. He finally relents when Parzival merely augments his conditions for sparing Orilus's life by demanding that he promise to go to Arthur's court and offer himself as subject to Cunneware. Parzival's successful attempt to reconcile Orilus and Jeschute is an example of the use of knightly violence, albeit

²⁴⁹ 'Lady Jeschute won back the greeting (of her husband) through the sword of a brave hero.'

²⁵⁰ 'Parzival, the brave warrior, fought for Orilus's favor toward Jeschute with the sword.'

followed by negotiation, to end unjustified violence, namely the violence against Jeschute. After Parzival swears an oath that Jeschute is innocent, Orilus concedes that his defeat has brought him happiness (268.28-70.28). Orilus and Parzival part from each other in friendship, as evinced by Orilus's invitation to Parzival to stay with them (271.18-22).

There are a number of other acts of violence against women in *Parzival* that, although they are significant, do not receive as much attention as that against Jeschute. Earlier in the narrative Parzival meets four knights in the woods who are in pursuit of two other knights who have abducted a woman (120.24-21.19). The leader of the knights, Karnachkarnanz, is greatly concerned about the woman's suffering: "den helt ez dûhte schande: / in müete der juncvrouwen leit, / diu jaemerlîche vor in reit" (121.20-22).²⁵¹ Karnachkarnanz states that the men who abducted her do not conduct themselves according to "ritterlîcher zunft" 'knightly code of behavior' (122.17) and are no longer worthy knights (122.19). Though the narrative purpose of these knights is to spur Parzival on to become a knight, the narrator does not leave the fate of the maiden to speculation. Later, the reader learns that one of the knights who took the lady was Meljakanz (125.9-11), who shares his name with that of the knight who took Ginover from King Arthur in *Iwein* (4579-610). Karnachkarnanz bests him in a joust and thus frees the maiden, Imane (*Parzival* 125.12-13).

Parzival's unknightly act against Ither becomes an act of violence against women (155.12-18). The narrator laments that Ither was killed with a hunting spear rather than in knightly combat (159.9-12). When Iwanet reports his death, women and knights alike lament it: "des manec wîp verzagte / und manec ritter weinde, / der clagende triuwe erscheinde"

²⁵¹ 'The hero thought the circumstances were shameful. The suffering of the maiden, who rode in misery before them, distressed him.'

(159.22-24).²⁵² Even Queen Ginover, whom Ither has inadvertently insulted (146.20-24), laments his death (160.1-30).

Many nameless women suffer violence in *Parzival*. Cundry tells of four queens and four hundred maidens who are to be found at Schastel marveile (318.13-24).²⁵³ Only the four queens are named (334.11-22). Meljakanz, who belongs to the army of knights that Gawan sees on his way to fight Kingrimursel, is said to have raped both married women and maidens whenever he longed for *minne* (343.23-30). Urian, who steals Gawan's horse, had been bested by Gawan in a previous battle (522.17-30, 524.9-26.5). On that occasion, Gawan sent him to King Arthur's court, where he had to eat with the dogs for four weeks for raping a maiden. The lady's name is unknown, yet Orgeluse takes it upon herself to punish him because Arthur did not execute him at the time; she declares that he will die before he leaves her kingdom (529.2-16).

Keye's violence toward Cunneware is another act of unjustified violence, but, though Cunneware is surrounded by knights and noblewomen (151.7-12), no one intervenes to prevent Keye's chastisement of the lady, possibly because they can sympathize with Keye's anger. Cunneware was not to laugh until she saw the knight who had or would attain the highest praise (151.11-19). Her laughter upon seeing Parzival, an apparent country bumpkin, raises Keye's ire:

Dô nam Keye scheneschlant
vroun Cunnewâren de Lâlant
mit ir reiden hâre:

²⁵² 'Many women were despondent and many knights wept. Their grieving showed their loyalty.'

²⁵³ For more information concerning this episode, see the section on sexual violence, pp. 227-29.

ir lange zöpfe clâre
 die want er umbe sîne hant,
 er spancte si âne türbant.
 ir rücke wart kein eit gestabt:
 doch wart ein stap sô dran gehabt,
 unz daz sîn siusen gar verswanc,
 durch die wât unt durch ir vel ez dranc. (151.21-30)²⁵⁴

The narrator is appalled by Keye's angry act: "ob si halt schilt solde tragen, / diu unvuoge ist dâ geslagen: / wan si was von arde ein vürstîn" (152.17-19).²⁵⁵

5. Catalysts for violence

Keye has the crowded hall to thank for the fact that Parzival does not immediately take vengeance, both for Keye's treatment of Cunneware and for the beating he gives Antanor, a man who would not speak until Cunneware laughed (152.23-153.20). Parzival is saddened when he sees Cunneware and Antanor mistreated (151.1-6, 153.14-17), but he cannot be said to be motivated to violence in general by Keye's actions; Parzival's enthusiasm for a fight is already in evidence,²⁵⁶ but he is instinctively incited to vengeance against Keye. After he is armed,

²⁵⁴ 'The seneschal Keye took Cunneware of Lalant by her curly hair. He wound her long blond braids around his hand and held her with iron cstrength. Her back was not called for by an oath, but Keye beat it so hard with a staff that she felt it through her clothes and skin until its noise was silenced.'

²⁵⁵ 'Even if she should have carried a shield the act would have been outrageous, because she was a princess.' In other words: 'if she had been a man.'

²⁵⁶ See the section on *Kampfeslust*.

Parzival sends Iwanet back to King Arthur to assure him of his loyalty and to report that one of Arthur's knights (Keye) has insulted him (158.20-30). Though Parzival still has much to learn about courtly behavior, his claim that Keye has insulted him means that Keye must pay for this crime, since it was not seemly for a knight to forgive an insult (Brown 90). By the time Parzival bests Kingrun in battle, he has learned the rules of courtly behavior. He sends the dishonored knight to Cunneware to proclaim his determination to seek vengeance on Keye:

“und sage ir, swaz halt mir geschehe,
daz si mich nimmer vrô gesehe,
ê daz ich si gereche
aldâ ich schilt durchsteche.” (198.29-199.2)²⁵⁷

Parzival further states that he will not return to King Arthur's court before he has avenged Cunneware (199.3-11). Similarly, Parzival sends the defeated Clamides to King Arthur's court to complain of the shame that he suffered when Keye beat Cunneware for laughing at him (214.30-215.12). When Parzival sends Orilus to Cunneware to swear his submission to her, she refuses at first to accept it because Orilus is her brother (267.9-20, 275.19-30). Cunneware finally accepts his subjection to her only so that he may keep his promise to Parzival, but immediately grants him his freedom (276.1-11).

By sending Cunneware's brother to King Arthur's court, Parzival again raises the ire of all the knights and ladies there against Keye, who mistreated her (276.13-277.3). Orilus does not fight a joust against Keye in this scene, however. The narrator deftly turns the attention of the reader from the company's anger against Keye to welcoming the newcomers, and from

²⁵⁷ ““And tell her that, whatever happens to me, she will never see me happy until I have avenged her by driving a lance through a shield.””

Cunneware's former suffering to Jeschute's (277.1-278.5). Orilus's attention is drawn to the tent with his family's crest wherein his armor is removed (278.11-21). Keye is careful to avoid serving Orilus at table (278.29-279.10).

Parzival at last avenges Cunneware in the famous scene involving three drops of blood in the snow; Keye attacks him while he is distracted by what he believes is the image of his beloved, Condwiramurs, in the snow (282.11-283.23, 295.1-30). Keye threatens Parzival repeatedly. His words alone would be enough to incite Parzival to action, were he paying attention:

“Daz ir den künec gelastert hât,
 welt ir mir volgen, so ist mîn rât
 unt dunct mich iuwer bestez heil,
 nemt iuch selben an ein brackenseil
 unt lât iuch vür in ziehen.
 ir enmegt mir niht enpflihen,
 ich bringe iuch doch betwungen dar:
 sô nimt man iuwer unsanfte war.” (294.1-8)²⁵⁸

Because these remarks have not been enough to incite Parzival to violence, Keye insults him further:

“du muost wachen.

²⁵⁸ ““Since you have insulted the king, I advise you to take my advice, and I think it would be in your best interest to put on a dog collar and let yourself be led before him. You can't get away from me; I will force you to come with me there either way. No one is going to handle you with kid gloves.””

âne lîn lachen
 wirt dir dîn slâfen hie benant:
 ez zilt al anders hie mîn hant:
 ûf den snê du wirst geleit.
 der den sac von der mûle treit,
 wolt man in sô bliuwen,
 in möhte lazheit riuwen.” (294.13-20)²⁵⁹

Keye's next act is unchivalrous. Though the Red Knight is unknown to King Arthur's court and, hence, poses a threat, Keye has failed to engage his attention. Keye, therefore, attacks him anyway, momentarily knocking the image of the drops of snow from his view (295.1-9). Thus provoked, Parzival knocks Keye from his horse and, in so doing, breaks both his right arm and left leg (295.17-25). It is through this act, the narrator claims, that Parzival has avenged both Cunneware and himself (295.28-30). Cunneware rewards Parzival with her good opinion and her greeting (305.27-306.9). Even after Parzival has avenged Cunneware, he still sends the knights he defeats at Bearosche to her (389.4-13). Parzival uses knightly prowess to serve Cunneware, but it is not an act of love service. He sends knights to her as though he were paying a debt, promising each time to enact vengeance for the suffering she endured because of him through Keye. Even though he is unaware of what he is doing at the time, Parzival's violent act against Keye is justified for two reasons: because of Keye's violence against a noble woman and because Keye is the aggressor against Parzival.

²⁵⁹ ““Wake up. You'll go to sleep here without bed linens. My hand has chosen another target: you'll be laid out on the snow. Even the beast that carries the sack from the mill would rue his insolence were he to get such a bruising.””

After Cundry's violent oral attack on Parzival, she mentions four hundred maidens and four queens at Schastel marveile (318.13-22), which serves as a catalyst for many knights. After Parzival's departure from their midst, many of Arthur's knights leave for Schastel marveile to gain honor (334.1-6). A Greek knight, Klias, admits to already having sought out the castle and having been defeated by another knight (334.11-15). This defeat only encourages more knights to try their luck there, with infelicitous results (334.23-25). This adventure at Schastel marveile is the catalyst that engages Gawan in violence there.²⁶⁰

An unknown knight by the name of Kingrimursel who enters King Arthur's camp as they all sit together serves as another catalyst for violence (319.20-320.5). He accuses Gawan of murdering his lord (321.5-15). The accusation alone would have been enough to secure Gawan's violent defense of his innocence and his honor, but the stranger challenges Gawan directly (321.16-22). Gawan must take up the challenge; the accuser's words dishonor both Gawan and the Round Table, since Gawan is a member of it, and the king's nephew (321.23-322.15). It is noteworthy that the knight's challenge serves as a catalyst for violence for more than one knight; not only does Gawan feel compelled to fight, but Gawan's brother, Beacurs, also begs to fight on Gawan's behalf (323.1-23). King Arthur states that, if Gawan were dead, he would take up the sword to defend his nephew's honor (322.13-18). Kingrimursel knows that Gawan cannot deny his challenge: "ist hêr Gâwân lobes snel, / der mac sich anders niht entsagen / ern müeze kampf dâ gein mir tragen" (324.22-24).²⁶¹ Gawan is certainly concerned for his honor; when he considers fighting in the battle at Bearosche, he is concerned lest it should cause him to miss his

²⁶⁰ See the section on sexual violence, pp. 227-29.

²⁶¹ "“If Sir Gawan's honor is important to him, he cannot deny me; he must fight against me.””

appointment with Kingrimursel (350.1-13, 350.30-351.1). Believing Gawan guilty of a heinous crime, Kingrimursel deeply desires to dishonor him:

vriunt und vîent im des jach,
 sîn crîe waer gein prîse hel,
 swie gerne in Kingrimursel
 mit kampfete hete dâ von genomen. (339.8-11)²⁶²

Love service, a major catalyst for violence in Middle High German Arthurian romances, was not always successful (731.27-30). The argument between Obie and Obilut ultimately comes about through Obie's refusal of King Meljanz (344.15-18, 345.26-346.2). Obie declared that, were he to engage in battles for five years and win them all, it would still be too soon for her to grant him her love (346.3-14). Obie's maidenly pride backfires, for Meljanz, believing that only Lippaut, her father, could have taught her to behave thus, seeks revenge against him for her rejection (347.7-14). This difference of opinion in the matter of love service moves many knights to violent action, as is evinced by the size of the army that besieges Bearosche (351.3-4). Two kings are among those who attack Bearosche: Meljakanz and his uncle, Poydiconjunz von Gors (356.13-22). Just as Erec stood in the road to confront an army of knights in order to prove he was not a coward (*Erec* 6878-87), Gawan, after long debate, decides to enter the battle, so that no one would be able to question his bravery (*Parzival* 350.1-16).

Lippaut is in an awkward position because Meljanz is his liege lord (354.27-355.22), but this episode shows that a knight could view a lady's rejection as an insult worthy of revenge. Meljanz adopts such a perspective. Lippaut is left casting about for a way to minimize the

²⁶² 'Friend and foe alike said of him that his war cry was clear in the pursuit of honor.

How gladly would Kingrimursel have taken that fame from him in battle.'

damage. He offers to stand trial or offer anything that would avert a battle against his lord, but his pleading is useless in the face of Meljanz's desire for revenge (347.19-30). In order to avoid an all-out battle between Lippaut and the two armies that besiege his castle, he has his best knights sent out to determine a winner in single combat (355.26-356.2). An unplanned tournament begins, however, when Lippaut opens the gates, for the defenders rush out and begin to joust with members of the besieging armies (356.27-357.4). Unrequited love results in death for some of the knights and many of the horses in the battle at Bearosche (386.15-18, 387.25-26).

There are two catalysts for the violent encounter between Gawan and Gramoflanz.²⁶³ Gawan's removal of branches to make a wreath is an open challenge to the tree's protector, Gramoflanz, who normally refuses to fight against only one knight at a time (604.21-30). He makes an exception when he discovers that the thief is Gawan (610.1-5). Likewise, Gawan cannot ignore the accusation that his father, King Lot, killed Gramoflanz's father, Irot (608.10-609.26). That Gramoflanz wants to take revenge on Lot's son is understandable; revenge killing of the kindred of a murderer had been a tradition since the Germanic period (Bloch 125). Gramoflanz rejoices at the opportunity to fight the man whom he hates (609.27-24). They agree to meet in fourteen days at Joflanze (611.1-6).

6. *Kampfeslust*

Throughout the *Vorgeschichte* 'prehistory' concerning Parzival's parents, Gachmuret's *Kampfeslust* 'enthusiasm for fighting' is evident. After Gachmuret defeats Belakane's enemies, the burgrave, Lachfilirost, pulls him away (43.9-18). Gachmuret is not pleased at this; he wants

²⁶³ The same can be said of Parzival and Gramoflanz; Parzival has stolen a wreath of branches from Gramoflanz's tree, and, when he learns that Gawan is Gramoflanz's enemy, Parzival challenges him, offering to fight instead of Gawan (679.14-16, 693.1-12, 700.30-701.6).

to keep fighting (44.1). Gachmuret's thirst for *ritterscheffe* 'knightly fighting' eventually drives him to flee Belakane secretly (54.17-55.8). When Gachmuret agrees to marry Herzeloide, he insists that she allow him to participate in monthly tournaments (97.7-10), but he does not do this out of love service to Herzeloide, but rather out of *Kampfeslust*.

Gachmuret's cousin, Keylet, reports how the young Gawan, still a boy at the time, displays his enthusiasm for knighthood:

“hie ist ouch Gâwân, des sun,
 sô cranc daz er niht mac getuon
 ritterschaft deheine.
 er was bî mir, der cleine:
 er sprichet, möhte er einen schaft
 zebrechen, trôste in des sîn craft,
 er tæte gerne ritters tat.
 wie vruo es sîn ger begunnen hât!” (66.15-22)²⁶⁴

Gawan is not the only one who shows enthusiasm for the upcoming tournament. The tradition of the *vesperîe* alone evinces the enthusiasm that knights displayed for tournaments. Such anticipatory jousts could themselves turn into battles. In *Parzival*, two knights, Schyolarz von Poitou and Gurnemanz von Graharz, begin a *vesperîe*, which quickly turns into the real thing (68.19-24, 79.10-12). According to poetic tradition, the most famous knights sometimes held back and let the less experienced ones tire themselves before joining in (Bumke 352). Though

²⁶⁴ ““Gawan, his son, is also here, who is so young that he cannot engage in any knightly battles. The little one was with me and said that, if he felt strong enough to break a lance (in a joust), he would gladly do knightly deeds. How early his desire (for fighting) has begun!””

Gachmuret is largely unknown at Kanvoleis (*Parzival* 61.29-62.2), he behaves according to type; he does not hurry to join the fray, but holds back to watch how the others fight (*Parzival* 69.1-9). But of the others who fight there, the narrator exclaims: “wie sie nâch prîse rungen, / der clingen alsus clungen!” (69.15-16).²⁶⁵ The narrator suggests that Gachmuret’s enthusiasm for this fight may stem from either love, because of Queen Ampflise of France, or the joy of exercising his own prowess (78.21-24). Lâhelin becomes angry because Gachmuret is winning, thereby causing the conquered dishonor, and the fighting, therefore, becomes serious (79.13-20). Lâhelin soon comes to grief, however, as Gachmuret sends him flying from his horse (79.25-29). Gachmuret stops fighting when he realizes his brother, Galoes, is dead (80.6-81.5). In spite of the fact that Herzeloide declares Gachmuret the winner, the fighting continues among those who are still enthusiastic until nightfall, when the knights can no longer see one another (82.5-17)

Though in his childhood, Gachmuret’s son, Parzival, knows nothing of knights, he shows an instinct for knighthood and expresses the same desire for battle that his father showed, even before he sees the knights in the woods (120.24-28). At first, his instincts drive him to hunt. He crafts his own bow and arrows with which he shoots birds (118.3-6), and he learns to throw a hunting spear with which he kills deer (120.2-4). The desire for actual battle is manifest even before he sees his first knight. When he hears a group of three knights approaching, thinking it is the Devil, he says:

“waz hân ich vernomen?
wan wolte et nu der tiuvel komen
mit grimme zorneclîche!
den bestüende ich sicherlîche.

²⁶⁵ ‘How the swords of those rang out who zealously fought for honor.’

mîn muoter vreisen von im sagt:

ich waene ir ellen sî verzagt.”

alsus stuont er in strîtes ger. (120.17-23)²⁶⁶

Herzeloyde has ordered the servants not to mention knights in Parzival's presence (117.19-28), but Parzival's battle stance as he waits for whatever approaches recalls that of Erec, who stood waiting to fight a great troop in the night (*Erec* 6837-900).

When Parzival learns that the four knights he sees are not gods, he immediately asks who grants knighthood (122.21-123.6). From that hour on, he forgets about hunting and wants nothing more than to become a knight (126.9-14). It seems from the context, however, that Parzival is more impressed by their dress than by their vocation, for he says the knights were: “noch liechter danne got getân” ‘brighter than God’ (126.10). All that he knows about the vocation of knighthood he has learned from Karnachkarnanz, whose explanation is less adequate than Kalogrenant's in *Iwein*, for Karnachkarnanz says nothing of knightly honor (124.5-10). It may be that Parzival has managed to infer something of the honor that knighthood entails from Karnachkarnanz's description of the abductors, who lack honor (122.14-20). Considering the remarkable lack of understanding of women that Parzival displays toward Jeschute, however, any basic understanding of knightly honor on his part seems unlikely at this point (130.26-132.4).

Orilus's wrath against Jeschute's lover makes him eager for battle. He is convinced that Jeschute has been unfaithful to him, so that, when Parzival meets her a second time, Jeschute

²⁶⁶ ““What do I hear? If the Devil wants to come with grim wrath, I would certainly stand my ground against him! My mother says terrible things about him, but I think she just lacks courage.” He stood there hungry for a fight.’

warns him against fighting against her husband: “der hât sich strîtes sô bewegen, / iuwer sehse koemen es in arbeit” (259.20-21).²⁶⁷

Parzival’s enthusiasm for battle is evinced in his reaction to the information Sigune provides regarding the lands that Lâhelin has taken, as well as Schionatulander’s death:

dô sprach er “niftel, mir ist leit
 dîn kumber und mîn laster breit.
 swenn ich daz mac gerechen,
 daz wil ich gerne zechen.”
 dô was im gein dem strîte gâch. (141.25-29)²⁶⁸

Upon meeting King Arthur, Parzival shows great impatience to become a knight (149.12-16). He misunderstands Arthur’s hesitation to give him Ither’s armor (149.25-26), and demands that Ither hand over his horse and his armor, challenging him to a fight if he refuses (153.23-154.10). Parzival’s demand is uncourtly and unjustified and leads to his great sin of murdering a close relative, which he later regrets (161.7-8, 475.20-25). Parzival has insulted Ither with his threats, but, since Parzival wears no armor, Ither turns his lance around and strikes him with the blunt end of it, so that both Parzival and his horse fall to the ground (154.27-30). Parzival, angered, throws his hunting spear through Ither’s visor, killing him with an unknighly weapon in an unknighly manner (155.4-11), whereupon he robs the corpse of its armor

²⁶⁷ ““He is so eager for battle that six knights like you would have great toil against him.””

²⁶⁸ ‘Then he said: “Cousin, your sorrow and my dishonor grieve me. If I can avenge these things, I will gladly do so.” He was eager for the fight.’

(155.19-156.24). The narrator again mentions Parzival's impatience as Iwanet dresses him in Ither's armor (157.14-16).

Parzival's inclination is for battle rather than speech. Anfortas gives him a sword to encourage him to speak, but Parzival, believing it would be unseemly to ask questions, is silent (239.8-240.9). Yet he wants to do the inhabitants of Munsalwaesche good and not harm. When he sees that the knights have ridden away in the morning, he wants to ride after them to earn the sword he has been given and the accommodations of the night before (248.17-30). Since he failed to show Anfortas compassion by asking what ailed him, Parzival's honor has been destroyed without any knightly violence taking place (248.10-13). Thus, his resolve to hurry toward the fight lest he be taken for a coward is too late, because the members of the court have already lost all respect for him (247.21-248.30). This is one rare instance in the Arthurian legends when compassion rather than violence is demanded; no amount of prowess will redeem Parzival's honor. Sigune states: "mir ist wol bekant, / ze Munsalwaesche an iu verswant / êre und ritterlîcher prîs" (255.25-27).²⁶⁹

Those who do not yet know who the Red Knight is, however, and who have not heard of his lack of compassion at Munsalwaesche, praise him for his knightly prowess (278.24-26). King Arthur sets out with his knights to seek the Red Knight, who has killed Ither, and defeated both Kingrun and Clamide (280.1-15). He even wins honor for besting two of the Knights of the Round Table (305.2-6). Though Arthur does not know his name, Parzival's conquests in battle have brought him such fame that Arthur and his knights ask him to join the Round Table (280.16-18. 308.26-309.1). Parzival's honor is extinguished and that of the Round Table compromised when Cundry enters the camp; she tells King Arthur that the *prîs* 'honor, fame' of

²⁶⁹ "I know that you have lost all honor and knightly praise at Munsalwaesche."

the Round Table is destroyed and confronts Parzival with his failure to show compassion to Anfortas (314.19-318.4).

Even after Parzival sets out in sadness to return to Munsalwaesche to redeem his honor, he shows enthusiasm for battle (390.7-11). As with the celebratory tournament after Erec's wedding (*Erec* 2222-28), fighting could be a form of joyful entertainment. The association between joy and battle is so strong that no tournaments take place at Munsalwaesche, because the knights there are saddened by Anfortas's suffering (227.10-16, 242.4-7). When King Arthur sets out to seek Parzival, he makes his knights swear an oath that they will not engage another knight without permission. There can, perhaps, be no better analogy of the enthusiasm that knights had for fighting than the one that Arthur uses:

“Uf gerihtiu sper wir müezen sehen.
 welt ir dan vür ein ander schehen,
 als vreche rüden, den meisters hant
 abe stroufet ir bant,
 dar zuo hân ich niht willen.” (281.1-5)²⁷⁰

The knights' enthusiasm for battle makes it necessary for them to swear an oath to restrain themselves. In order to quell their possible disappointment, Arthur promises the knights that he will allow them to fight when it is necessary (281.7-8). Nonetheless, many knights are disappointed that they have sworn this oath when they hear of the knight in the woods who sits on his horse with raised lance, ready to fight (283.25-284.29). Segremours cannot rein in his enthusiasm for the fight; he races to Arthur and Ginover's tent and wakes them rudely from sleep

²⁷⁰ ““We will see many raised lances. I don't want you all to chase ahead of one another like a pack of brazen hounds, whose master has removed their leashes.””

to beg permission to be the first to challenge the knight in the woods (284.30-285.30). Arthur answers Segremours as though the latter were an over-excited child:

“dîn sicherheit mir des verjach,
 du soltest nâch mînem willen varn
 unt dîn unbescheidenheit bewarn.
 wirt hie ein tjost von dir getân,
 dar nâch wil manc ander man
 daz ich in lâze rîten
 und ouch nâch prîse strîten:
 dâ mite crenket sich mîn wer.” (286.2-9)²⁷¹

Segremours is overjoyed when Ginover talks Arthur into letting him fight anyway:

Gynovêr bat Artûsen sô
 dês Segramors wart al vrô.
 dô si im die âventiure erwarp,
 wan daz er niht vor liebe starp,

 ungerne hete er dô verjehen
 sîns kumenden prîses pflihte
 ieman an der geschichte. (286.15-22)²⁷²

²⁷¹ ““You swore to me that you would follow my will and avoid imprudence. If you engage here in a joust, other knights will ask me to allow them to fight and strive for glory. That will weaken my defenses.””

Fighting with a strange knight who has entered the camp and poses a threat is no mere entertainment (283.24-284.22), yet Segremours is ecstatic at the opportunity to fight. When Segremours ignominiously loses the fight (288.15-26), Keye threatens to leave King Arthur if he is not allowed the opportunity to repay the stranger for insulting the honor of the Round Table by defeating Segremours (290.3-22).

Knights display a competitive attitude in their desire to fight. The knights who come last to the battle at Bearosche are disappointed that the battle started without them; they fear that there will not be enough fighting to go around (377.13-22). Just as Segremours did not want to allow anyone else to take his opportunity to fight the Red Knight, the knight Poydiconjunz is jealous of his own opportunity, too; he pulls a younger knight, Duke Astor, out of the battle in front of the fortress Bearosche because he fought without waiting for Poydiconjunz and the two other brave knights who accompany them:

“geruocht ir mîn niht bîten,
 so ir vart durch rüemen strîten?
 sô waent ir daz sî guot getân.
 hie ist der werde Lahedumân
 unde ouch Meljacanz mîn sun:
 swaz die bêde solden tuon,
 und ich selbe, ir möht dâ strîten sehen,

²⁷² ‘Ginover asked Arthur so imploringly (to allow him to fight) and that made Segremours very happy. When she attained the desired adventure for him, he was so overjoyed that he nearly died. . . . He would not have been glad to give up his opportunity of forthcoming glory to someone else.’

ob ir strîten kundet spehen.

ichne kum nimer von dirre stat,

ichne mache uns alle strîtes sat.” (359.3-12)²⁷³

Poydiconjunz criticizes Astor essentially for having more enthusiasm for battle than consideration for his fellow knights, who also want to join the fight. Astor, however, scolds Poydiconjunz for taking too long to enter the fight: “solt iuwer her an slâfes vlîs / . . . ? / habt ir uns daz gelêret?” (359.18-20).²⁷⁴ He states that his fighting only secured Poydiconjunz’s army from shame (359.23-29). One’s fervor to fight could only be shown in deeds rather than words. Poydiconjunz’s hesitation and the act of pulling Astor back contradict his verbal enthusiasm. Astor’s rebuke is appropriate because hesitation in battle immediately invited the accusation of cowardice. If one were to display a competitive desire for battle, one had to enter the fray at the first opportunity.

When a strange knight known as the Turkoyte Florand appears with Orgeluse at Schastel marveile, it is obvious that he wants to joust (592.21-593.6). Queen Arnive tries to dissuade Gawan from fighting him, stating that, even if he were not wounded, Gawan should avoid fighting with this knight (593.23-594.13). Just as Wigalois expresses his determination to fight

²⁷³ ““You do not want to wait for me, so you go off to fight for your own honor? You think that you have done well by this. Here is the worthy Laheduman and my son Meljakanz. When both they and I break into the fight, then you will see what real fighting is, if you can judge it. I will not move from this spot until all of us have fulfilled our desire to fight.””

²⁷⁴ ““Should your army assiduously concern itself with sleep . . . ? Is that what you have taught us?””

when Nereja warns him not to (*Wigalois* 1932-62), Gawan could not honorably avoid the fight after such discouragement, nor has he any desire to avoid it:

“swer denne ûf al die êre mîn
 ritterschaft sô nâhe suochet,
 sît er strîtes geruochet,
 vrouwe, ich sol mîn harnasch hân.” (594.16-19)²⁷⁵

In spite of the fact that Gawan is so weak that he can hardly carry his shield, he is not to be dissuaded from fighting (595.24-28). In this battle, the Turkoyte, who had never failed to knock an opponent from his horse in a joust, suffers his first defeat (596.14-598.9). Gawan is a superlative knight, and it would, therefore, be impossible for him to avoid taking up such a challenge, especially after Arnive insists that he is too sickly to win; his honor would not have survived if he had acquiesced to her discouragement. The four Arthurian legends in this study amply illustrate the futility of attempting to dissuade a warrior from undertaking a dangerous *âventiure*, as do other forms of fictional medieval narrative.²⁷⁶

Though knights could not honorably avoid a conflict or forgive an offence without vengeance (Brown 90), there were occasions to show mercy. When Parzival visits Gurnemanz, the old man tells him: when a knight admits his defeat, do not kill him if he has not done you any heartfelt pain (171.25-30). He follows this advice when he defeats Kingrun before

²⁷⁵ ““When a man comes so near to challenge all my honor, seeking knightly combat, lady, I must have my armor.””

²⁷⁶ Consider, for example, Siegfried’s reaction to his parents’ concerns when he wants to seek the hand of Kriemhild; he does not fear Gunther and he is determined to attain his desire (*Das Nibelungenlied* 48-52).

Condwiramurs's palace (197.28-198.4) and again when he defeats Clamide (212.21-214.3). A knight could dishonor himself by failing to show mercy in such circumstances.

Since it was not seemly for a knight to forgive an insult, it is worth noting that Arthur readily forgives Clamide for the injuries he has caused him (220.11-24). King Arthur can forgive Clamide without losing face because Parzival has already defeated Clamide, who had to ride to Arthur's court to declare his submission to Cunneware (212.21-215.12). In such circumstances, Arthur would have gone against the code of mercy that Gurnemanz taught Parzival, had he demanded Clamide's life for past injuries. Furthermore, since Clamide has already been defeated and sent to Arthur's court, it would have been pointless to have a knight joust against him again; he has already lost his honor.

7. Fate/The hand of God

Fate may be said to play a larger role in *Parzival* than in any other of the Arthurian romances covered in this study. Though God receives credit in other works for intervening in battles, fate receives special attention in *Parzival* because God has chosen Parzival to be the next protector of the Grail after Anfortas. Some of the major events in Parzival's life are, therefore, predetermined. Because Sigune does not recognize Parzival, she does not believe him when he says that he has spent the night at Munsalwaesche:

si sprach: "swer iu getrûwet iht,
den sult ir gerne triegen niht.
.....
inre drîzec mîlen wart nie versniten
ze keinem bûwe holz noch stein:
wan ein burc diu stêt al ein.

.....
 swer die suochet vlîzeclîche,
 leider der envint ir niht.

 ez muoz unwizzende geschehen,
 swer immer sol die burc gesehen.” (250.17-30)²⁷⁷

Sigune accuses Parzival of lying in the above passage, because she does not recognize him. Presumably, Sigune knows that Parzival has been called to be the next Grail keeper, because, when she realizes she is speaking with Parzival, she believes he must have delivered Anfortas from his suffering (251.29-252.8).

The choice of Parzival’s wife is one of the factors that is predetermined in *Parzival*. Though Clamide challenges Parzival to a battle for Condwiramurs and her land, God receives the credit for determining the outcome of the battle even before it takes place:

ûz kom geriten Parzivâl
 an daz urteillîche wal,
 dâ got erzeigen solde
 ob er im lâzen wolde
 des künece Tampenteires barn. (210.27-211.1)²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ ‘She said: “You should not tell lies to anyone who shows trust in you. . . . There is no building, whether of wood or of stone, within thirty miles of here, except for a single burg. . . . Whoever seeks it diligently will never find it. . . . Whoever sees the burg must come upon it without knowing it.”’

It was Anfortas's attempt to serve the wrong woman in battle that resulted in his violent suffering (478.13-481.18); Parzival could not have married anyone but Condwiramurs without incurring God's wrath.

The characters within Middle High German Arthurian legend did not believe in a God who always brought only positive things into their lives; they believed in a just God whose ways they did not always comprehend (797.23-27). The God who serves as arbiter by determining the outcome of a battle in favor of the righteous individual also meted out justice to His subjects by the same violent means. This is what happens to Anfortas, who attributes his agony to God: "der sprach 'hêrre, ich brâhtz in nôt / in maneger stat, ê daz mich got / an dem lîbe hât geletzet'" (239.25-27).²⁷⁹ The nature of God's punishment of Anfortas is a wound that is unhealable unless Parzival shows him compassion by asking him what ails him (240.7-9). Sigune expresses the severity of Anfortas's punishment:

"der mac gerîten noch gegên
noch geligen noch gestên.
der ist ûf Munsalvaesche wirt:
ungenâde in niht verbirt." (251.17-20)²⁸⁰

Anfortas's sin of pursuing Orgeluse in love service (478.8-479.12, 616.11-20), a lady that God had not preordained for him, leads to his suffering and to that of all the Grail people (231.15-26,

²⁷⁸ 'Parzival came riding out to the battlefield of judgment, where God would show if He wanted him to retain King Tampenteire's daughter,'

²⁷⁹ 'He said: "Sir, I used it much in battle until God afflicted me with a wound"'

²⁸⁰ "'He can neither ride nor walk, neither lie nor stand. He is the host of Munsalwaesche. God will not release him from His wrath.'"

242.4-7), including Parzival and his wife. Parzival's long journey as he seeks to return to Munsalwaesche to release Anfortas from his suffering causes Condwiramurs to suffer because the two do not see one another for five years (797.1-3, 799.1-3).

8. Sexual violence

Both Anfortas and Klingsor are the victims of a form of violence that compromised their sexual organs. Anfortas, whose name is from an Old French word meaning 'infirmity' (Campbell 392), was wounded in his genitalia by a poisoned lance (479.8-12). He won the battle against the heathen who wanted to usurp him as keeper of the Grail, but God punished him for pursuing Orgeluse; he carried the tip of the poisoned lance that wounded him in his body (479.18-27). Trevrizent tries to manipulate God by renouncing knighthood, in the hope that God would then heal his brother (251.13-15, 480.10-15). Such attempts to bargain for God's forgiveness and favor are pronounced in the medieval era; they reflect the culture of asceticism born of the belief that God rewards suffering (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 58-59; *Parzival* 487.20-22). Unfortunately, Trevrizent's decision to take up a life of asceticism and renounce violence causes the people of the Grail further grief (*Parzival* 480.19-29). Anfortas cannot die when he looks at the Grail (480.25-29). He is the victim of God's wrath, for, though the people of the Grail try every possible medicine, Trevrizent maintains that God did not want to heal him (481.5-18).

Parzival's failure to ask the question that will heal Anfortas destroys his own happiness (484.21-30, 488.3-30). He becomes a stranger and an enemy in the surrounding land; when he enters the land in his search for the Grail, he must fight one of the Grail knights who takes umbrage with his presence (443.6-444.26). Many knights live at Munsalwaesche, so it is

understandable that Parzival would have to fight his way into the land, though it is barren²⁸¹ (225.19-22, 468.23-25). It is also likely, however, that the Grail company would like vengeance against Parzival for his apparent lack of compassion, as is suggested by the doorkeeper's behavior when Parzival leaves Munsalwaesche; he pulls up the end of the bridge too quickly, so that Parzival's horse nearly stumbles, and calls out scornfully to Parzival (247.13-30).

The adventure at Schastel marveile is also sexual in nature. Clinschor, whom King Ibert castrated for sleeping with his wife, Iblis (656.25-657.25), has abducted over four hundred women, depriving them of any society with men. Clinschor exacted revenge on all noble knights and ladies with the goal of destroying their happiness (658.3-8). Utepandragon's wife, Arnive, was either abducted or went willingly with Clinschor while Gawan was still a child (66.4-5).²⁸² Years later, Cundry reminds the Knights of the Round Table of the unfortunate ladies who are imprisoned at Schastel marveile (318.13-24). When Gawan asks a maiden and her father about the fortress and the ladies whom he sees there, both are distressed (554.28-556.15), but Gawan's first concern is for the ladies (556.17). The *wirt* does not tell him what the circumstances of the fortress are before he tells him to arm himself for battle; he knows that Gawan will want to free the ladies as soon as he has heard of their plight (557.1-5). His hesitation to tell Gawan of the ladies' distress stems from his desire to protect Gawan (559.19-30), just as the host at the castle *Joie de la curt* tries to protect Erec from Mabonagrín (*Erec* 8474-519). Clinschor's

²⁸¹ The barren aspect of the land is a reflection of the infertility that Anfortas suffers as a result of his injury. Anfortas's sin in pursuing Orgeluse thus results in violence against the land.

²⁸² The description of how King Arthur's mother, Arnive, came into Clinschor's power is ambiguous (66.5), but Arnive complains at length about her grief in living in a foreign land at Schastel marveile where no one came for many years to rescue her (659.19-661.2).

determination to avenge himself on all knights and ladies for his inability to enjoy sexual relations is so strong that the ladies in the fortress are not even allowed to see Gawan, who has come to rescue them (*Parzival* 565.21-30). The adventure that Gawan must overcome at Schastel marveile is symbolic of Clinschor's sexual frustration; he has created a bed on wheels that first eludes Gawan's attempt to reach it and then attempts to throw its occupant off as it speeds as fast as the wind across the slippery floor (566.14-568.14). Next, Gawan is pelted with pebbles and arrows (568.21-569.7). He fights a great, hungry lion, which he bores through the heart (571.11-572.21). These impediments are meant to hinder Gawan from getting to the ladies in the fortress. Since it is impossible for Clinschor to make love to a lady, he tries to make these ladies impossible for anyone to attain. Fortunately, Gawan prevails and the ladies are freed (576.27-577.4).

9. Modes of conflict resolution

Most forms of conflict resolution in *Parzival*, as in each of the works covered in this study, involve violence. The narrator grants the reader another glimpse of the results of battle with his description of battered, broken shields, and the suffering of the knights who fought for Belakane:

der hêrre schouwen began
 manegen schilt zebrochen,
 mit spern gar durchstochen:
 der was dâ vil gehangen vür,
 an die wende und an die tür.
 si heten jâmer unde guft.
 in diu venster gein dem luft

was gebettet mangem wunden man,

swenn er den arzât gewan

daz er doch mohte niht genesen.

der was bî vîenden gewesen.

sus warb ie der ungerne vlôch. (19.20-20.1)²⁸³

The narrator juxtaposes the unconquered Gachmuret and his impressive entourage full of squires, trumpeters, floutists, a tambourinist, and three fiddlers (18.17-16), with the broken, dying men of Patelamunt, whose agonized screams are heard echoing from the windows. Gachmuret's father, Gandin, and his grandfather, Addanz, both died in battle (56.5-9). Gachmuret's brother, Galoes, dies in a joust for the sake of love (80.14-18). Galoes had been in love with a powerful queen, who died of grief at his death (81.1-4). Gachmuret himself, who made it a stipulation of his marriage to Herzeloyde that he be allowed to participate in tournaments (97.7-11), later succumbs in battle (105.1-106.17).

Within knighthood, conflicts are most often resolved through violence, but there are occasions in *Parzival* when reasoning is used to reach a peaceful resolution. Vergulacht's ire against Gawan is aroused for allegedly attempting to rape his sister, Antikone (407.11-21, 410.30), Kingrimursel, who promised Gawan safe conduct into Plimizöl, finds that his honor is destroyed before his joust with Gawan, because a group of knights has attacked him (415.9-416.16). Kingrimursel must rescue the man whom he challenged to a joust (411.4-412.2).

²⁸³ 'The lord began to see many broken shields, bored through by spears, hanging on the walls and doors. There were lamentations and screams. Many a wounded man, who could not be healed by a doctor, was laid in the windows for the fresh air. He had been (fighting against) the enemy. That is what happens to someone who did not gladly flee.'

A nameless individual attempts to move Vergulacht to compassion in order to dissuade him from continuing the attack against Gawan, pointing out that even Vergulacht's sister, Antikonie, weeps next to Gawan at the proceedings (412.11-413.9). Antikonie uses a code of conduct to criticize Vergulacht, saying that it is wrong to attack a man who has given himself over to the protection of a woman (414.10-415.8). Prince Liddamus wants to kill Gawan, but Kingrimursel ridicules Liddamus for behaving like a woman in every battle, concluding that his advice is worthless (416.8-30). These different voices represent various means to resolve a conflict verbally, including ridicule, which one might have thought would incite further violence. Nonetheless, the attempt to resolve the conflict verbally halts the violent attack against Gawan. Though the joust between Kingrimursel and Gawan is only postponed (418.9-25), the conflict between Vergulacht and Gawan evolves into a legal proceeding without further violence (422.13-17, 424.7-426.10).²⁸⁴

The joust that Gramoflanz and Gawan plan to ride at Joflanze is problematic²⁸⁵ because Gramoflanz is in love with Gawan's sister, Itonje (606.21-607.16, 609.1-17). Bene, the daughter of a ferryman at Schastel marveile, is upset when she discovers that Gramoflanz is to fight Itonje's brother (694.9-18). She puts the matter succinctly:

“wan sweder iuwer dâ beligt,

²⁸⁴ Another conflict that arose from initial violence, Kingrimursel's loss of honor through Vergulacht's attack on Gawan, is also forgiven without violence (428.27-29). The battle between Kingrimursel and Gawan still takes place a year later when Gawan defeats him (503.5-11).

²⁸⁵ The fight between Gramoflanz and Parzival is also problematic, because Itonje and Parzival are related (706.15-20).

nâch dem mîn vrouwe jâmers pfligt.

diu ist ze bêder sît erslâgen.

mîn vrouwen und mich muoz ich wol clagen.

waz hilft daz ir ir bruoder sît?

mit ir herzen welt ir vehten strît.” (697.3-8)²⁸⁶

It is unusual in the Arthurian legends for a knight to offer to give up a fight, but Gawan is rational; he would gladly forgo the battle if Gramoflanz agreed (708.17-20). Gawan’s attempt to keep the battle secret from Itonje fails (696.25-30, 710.10-30). Arthur intervenes by discussing the matter with Gramoflanz’s uncle, Brandelidelin, the king of Punturtoys (726.9-22). Between the two of them, they agree to prevent the battle between their nephews, and Arthur agrees to attain Orgeluse’s favor toward Gramoflanz (726.25-727.15). Orgelus’s enmity toward Gramoflanz finally brings about a felicitous end to the conflict between Gramoflanz and Gawan; she agrees to forgive Gramoflanz under the stipulation that he give up the fight with Gawan and withdraw the accusation leveled against Gawan’s father (727.29-728.8). Gawan and King Arthur, by convincing Orgeluse to forgive Gramoflanz, have thus brought two long-standing conflicts to a non-violent end: that of Orgeluse toward Gramoflanz, and that of Gramoflanz toward Gawan.

10. Accidental violence

As has been seen in both *Erec* and *Iwein*, accidental or unintentional violence against a friend or relative is a common motif in Arthurian legends. It occurs on a grand scale in *Parzival*

²⁸⁶ ““For, whoever is defeated, my lady will mourn for him. In either case, it will mean her death. I am distressed for my lady as well as myself. What good is it that you are her brother? You want to do battle with her heart.””

because Gawan is determined to be secretive when he asks King Arthur to meet him in Joflanze (665.25-30, 667.25-26). This results in open battle between Orgeluse's army and Arthur's, in which both armies suffer great losses (664.1-665.24). Gawan chaffs Arthur for this, saying that, since Orgeluse is a widower, he should have aided rather than attacked her (672.25-673.1).

Though Gawan's secret results in needless violence, Parzival's combat against his cousin, Gawan, and his brother, Feirefiz, seems to stem from a streak of bad luck. In the battle at Bearosche, Gawan thanks God that he and Parzival did not unwittingly confront each other in combat (392.30-393.2). At Joflanze, however, the two cousins actually do fight each other when both believe the other to be Gramoflanz, whom they have come to fight (679.10-680.30). Parzival is seeking combat, not the opportunity to serve others. Whereas Gawan is sent by Orgeluse to pluck a wreath from Gramoflanz's tree, Parzival does so purely for the purpose of picking a fight with Gramoflanz. Parzival throws down his sword when a squire who happens upon them calls out Gawan's name in horror (688.1-21). The fight between Parzival and Gawan is not quite the pinnacle of the knightly battles that occur in *Parzival*; although these two are the heroes of the narrative, the fight that remains truly undecided is that between Parzival and Feirefiz (737.22-745.3). In both cases, Parzival is said to fight against himself (690.1-2, 738.9, 740.26-30). Perhaps both cases are symbolic for Parzival's journey in the romance; his renunciation of God was, in fact, a fight against his own interests. He had to realize that God, his opponent, was actually on his side before he could find the Grail and redeem his happiness and honor.

11. Chapter conclusion

Of all the Arthurian romances in this study, *Parzival* is the most spiritually oriented. The world of King Arthur and the world of the Grail are not always compatible. Anfortas discovers

this when he tries to follow the normally accepted courtly codes of love service toward Orgeluse (478.13-481.17). As a result, he suffers God's wrath for many years; God did not want him to be healed (251.16-20, 481.18). Parzival's appearance at Munsalwaesche causes the Grail company and Anfortas to believe that their deliverance is at hand. Consequently, his failure to ask the appropriate question heightens their suffering (240.3-9, 242.12-18). Anfortas would have to wait at least another five years to be healed (460.19-30). Parzival, too, learns that it is futile to reject God; it only causes further suffering (466.7-10). *Parzival* is full of acts of violence, from Gachmuret's proud service in Bagdad under the Baruc (13.16-16.1) and his justified attack against Belekane's enemies (37.21-42.6) to Parzival's accidental violence against his own brother (737.22-745.3). Some of these acts, such as Parzival's theft of a wreath from Gramoflanz's tree because of his desire to fight against the latter, are enacted purely in the pursuit of honor; there is, until Parzival learns of the imminent fight between Gawan and Gramoflanz, no other reason for violence between Gramoflanz and Parzival (679.14-16, 692.19-693.12). Many other acts of violence, however, are justified, and reflect the belief that it is the vocation of knights to mete out justice as God's representatives. One such instance occurs when Orgeluse causes Urian to fight against another knight for raping a woman (524.19-529.16). The fact that Urian loses the fight is evinced by the fact that he quickly loses the horse that he stole from Gawan; Gawan wins it back from Lischows (540.4-541.2). Knights believed historically that their suffering in battle meant that they were imitators of Christ because Christ also suffered (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 59). But God is not represented as suffering in *Parzival* as He sometimes is in the Gospels (Matt. 16.21). Instead, the narrative transfers the violent tendencies inherited from the Germanic warriors to God. As mentioned above, the idea of forgiveness for an insult was unthinkable to knights of the medieval era, yet, though it is

permissible for King Arthur to forgive Orilus for his offenses (220.11-24), God must be seen to take vengeance for sin by causing Anfortas to suffer, perhaps even in exponential ratio to his crime. A society that believed so steadfastly in both vengeance and asceticism had to have a God Who meted out retribution for disobedience. The world of King Arthur and that of the Grail coincide in the vocation of knighthood, but only as long as the knight practices strict obedience to what God has preordained for him. Within this parameter, the knights of the Grail can come and go between the land of Salwaesche and normal courtly society, free to engage in those violent acts that are preordained by the God of justice.

Conclusion

This study has sought to fill a gap in the scholarly understanding of how three medieval authors, Hartmann von Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and Wirnt von Grafenberg, deal with various manifestations of violence and conflict resolution in their Arthurian romances through the understanding that the knightly attitude toward conflict resolution was predicated upon the social necessity of attaining and maintaining honor. In recent decades historical scholarship by Gerd Althoff, Richard Kaeuper, Warren C. Brown and others has led to a greater understanding of violence in the Middle Ages, and how such conflicts may have been avoided or peacefully resolved. It has become clear, for example, that modern conceptions of the legislative processes and the organization of government, once glibly applied to the European Middle Ages, are not applicable in that context (Althoff 2).

According to the first chapter of Althoff's *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter*, references to the violence of the 'feudal age' are unjustifiably over-generalized. The extent of violence depends, to the extent to which they could control it, on the particular reigning dynasty in question. Historical records show that during the Ottonian and Salian dynasties, especially among the highest nobility, there were several methods in place for the express purpose of avoiding unnecessary violence. One such method of historical conflict resolution, which is markedly absent from the four Arthurian romances in this study, is resolution through an intermediary who oversees the exchange of goods in order to satisfy the sense of injury or injustice brought about by the conflict (Althoff 8-9). This type of resolution had existed at least since the time of the Icelandic *Alþingi* 'general assembly' (Faulkes), at which disputes were judged. In that particular Germanic culture, the exchange of goods for a homicide typically took the form of *Wergild*, 'the price of which a man is deemed worthy,' which the perpetrator would

pay as compensation to the victim's family (Owen 147; Russell 204). Other means of conflict resolution during the Ottonian and Salian dynasties included, but were not limited to, allowing oneself to be taken prisoner for ransom, abandoning a fortress to the enemy (Althoff 10), threats and ritualistic violence, such as the symbolic "destruction" of a fortress by tearing down one of its walls (Brown 135), and excommunicating the perpetrator of a conflict (Althoff 41). Such methods were far more characteristic of the Ottonian and Salian dynasties than either the Carolingian or Hohenstaufen dynasties, implying that the ruling houses at either extreme were more inclined to violent than peaceful resolution (Althoff 24). Courtly literature may well reflect the violent proclivities of the ruling class during which it was written.

The four Arthurian romances in this study do not contain ritualistic forms of conflict resolution that are meant to quell all-out combat. From an Arthurian perspective, such methods could easily be interpreted as manifestations of cowardice. Indeed, Kalogrenant's description of the vocation of knighthood makes it clear that knightly violence requires no catalyst (*Iwein* 529–37). The mere appearance of another man in armor is enough to bring about a violent conflict, as evinced, for example, by either of Erec's encounters with Guivreiz (*Erec* 4324–84, 6892–913). In the four works analyzed in this study, only one occasion arises when an attempt at resolution through mediation might be said to occur, namely, when Wigalois tries to persuade the Red Knight to return the horse, parrot, and dwarf that he stole from a Persian lady (*Wigalois* 2756–818). As is usual in Arthurian romances, the attempt at conflict resolution through an alternative means ends in violence (2968–3074). Nor does excommunication play a role in any of the works covered in this study. Parzival estranges himself twice from King Arthur's court, but in both cases the estrangement cannot be otherwise interpreted than self-inflicted (*Parzival* 304.7–18, 330.10–24). The same can be said of Erec, who resists entering King Arthur's court

because he has resolved to forgo all comforts (*Erec* 4922-83). Historically, ritualistic methods of averting violence – even through a lesser form of ritualistic violence – were sometimes constructed in such a way that an injured party could be seen to exercise authority and be merciful at the same time, thus saving face without inflicting lasting injury on the offender (Brown 137-38, 143-44). Although Gawain’s willingness to give up the fight with Gramoflanz is an exception (*Parzival* 708.17-20), knights in the Arthurian romances tend to welcome armed combat, even to the point of dispensing with conversation beforehand (*Erec* 6892-913; *Parzival* 737.9-738.18). The potential for saving face as a knight in a combative situation in the Arthurian romances is non-existent; only one knight in a joust can win honor. The other is dishonored, at least temporarily, and could lose either his horse, his life, or both. Though the unwritten code of knightly conduct provides rules of battle, thus creating a type of ritual, the violence of the romances is immediate and personal, not symbolic.

Violence in the Arthurian romances is heavily influenced by Germanic traditions of vengeance,²⁸⁷ but the romances are also strongly influenced by Christianity. Walther von der Vogelweide’s attempt to reconcile *varnde guot* ‘worldly possessions,’ *êre* ‘honor/worldly reputation,’ and *gotes hulde* ‘God’s grace’ was an attempt to reconcile the Germanic values of

²⁸⁷ There has been much scholarly debate over whether the Arthurian romances were adapted from Celtic versions. In the second chapter of *The Evolution of Arthurian Romances from the Beginnings to the Year 1300*, James Douglas Bruce questions whether there is enough evidence to support this theory. He points out though that those Arthurian motifs (as opposed to ‘romances’) that do appear in Celtic origins have been drastically adapted “to the conditions of feudal society” (68). The present work does not take up this debate except to claim that the motifs of vengeance in the Arthurian romances have a Germanic influence.

wealth and honor with Christian values (Jones 114). According to St. Bernard of Clairvaux, worldly possessions had no place in the life of a Christian knight (37). The emphasis on vengeance inherited from the forebears within the Germanic sphere was an uncomfortable fit with the ideals of Christianity; forgiving an insult was godly but shameful; avenging an insult was honorable but sinful (Jones 118). The Arthurian romances eschew the discussion; in the ideal world of King Arthur, and, one must add, Munsalwaesche, knights were God's envoys on earth. There is no question of a spiritual quandary as to whether the worldly acclaim that Erec, Wigalois, or any other knight wins in battle will lead to God's disfavor. Whereas, in historical reality, Walther's conundrum was undoubtedly still debated, the Arthurian romances are written as though no such problem exists. They express, in Jaeger's words "a synthesis of the warrior and the statesman, the knight and the courtly cleric" (196). Henry of Lancaster, who wrote a century after the four Arthurian romances in this study, saw in knightly battle an imitation of the sufferings of Christ and hence, penance for sin (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 41-42). Parzival echoes the spiritual valorization of battle in his conversation with Trevrizent: "Mac ritterschaft des lîbes prîs / unt doch der sêle pardîs / bejagen mit schilt und ouch mit sper" (*Parzival* 472.1-3).²⁸⁸ His words convey no uncertainty regarding the spiritual merit of knighthood; rather, they challenge God to recognize that spiritual merit and act justly toward him, i.e.: "If God understands [the spiritual valorization of] battle, then He must cause me to be successful in my search for the Grail" (472.8-11). The opposite corollary to Parzival's understanding of knightly battle as spiritually valorizing is that an act of cowardice is a sin. King Jorel in *Wigalois* takes this understanding of the relationship between battle and spiritual merit still further; his unwarranted

²⁸⁸ "If knightly deeds can attain both worldly honor and the soul's paradise with shield and spear . . ."

trust in Roaz and subsequent purgatorial punishment would seem to equate any type of dishonor with sin (3646-92, 4658-67). There are, however, numerous accounts of jousts with an ignominious end for one of the fighters who is not then burdened with a weight of sin for the dishonor he experienced in losing the battle. The influence of Christianity is perplexing because knights molded their theology to their liking, a practice which Kaeuper aptly refers to as “a highly selective appropriation of useful theological ideas” (*Holy Warriors* 50). Knights did not merely accept the theology espoused by clerics.

Unlike historical knights, who often committed great atrocities, knights of the Arthurian romances resemble modern fictional vigilantes, such as Batman, who channels his violence toward the general good, and who is also referred to as the Caped Crusader and the Dark Knight, making this fictional hero a singularly apposite comparison for the current study (Boichel 7, 11, 15). Another apt comparison, reflective of the movement of knighthood from the uncontrolled violence of history to the cultured violence of fiction, is the “Jedi knight” Luke Skywalker, who, like Parzival, must learn “to control the irrational savage within . . .” (Campbell, *Power of Myth* 6). The task of knights, as represented in the Arthurian romances, recalls the exhortation to the Knights Templar by Bernard of Clairvaux: “Nor does he bear the sword in vain. He is God’s minister in the punishment of evil doers and the praise of well doers. Surely, if he kills an evil doer, he is not a man-killer, but . . . an evil-killer” (Bernard 39). Narrators of Arthurian romances often paint their villains in unforgivable colors in order to provide their knights with opportunities for justified violence. It aids the process of vilification, too, if the foe happens to be an otherworldly creature who victimizes the helpless, and with whom it is obvious that the audience is not meant to identify. Such are the two giants in *Iwein* who enslave more than three hundred young ladies (6190-94, 6320-71), and whom the ladies refer to as “tiuvels knehten”

‘servants of the devil’ (6338). Wirnt makes it easy to compare his knightly hero to a Knight of the Temple who sets out to rid the world of evil; Wigalois destroys a knight who is in complicity with a devil when he kills Roaz (3656-61, 8738-62). These comparisons show the authors’ tendency to justify chivalrous violence by vilifying the enemy through spiritual means, a process that is analogous to the propagandized Crusades. Urban II, in his exhortation for the First Crusade to Jerusalem, promised remission of sins to those who heeded the call (Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors* 29).

Physical violence on the part of knights in the Arthurian romances is not merely a form of conflict resolution, nor is it undertaken as a last resort. Knights sometimes use violence in order to attain a desired goal unrelated to any personal or justified conflict with an adversary. An example of this occurs when Wigalois fights his potential host in order to earn the privilege of spending the night at the man’s fortress (*Wigalois* 1932-53). From the perspective of Wigalois’s and Nereja’s sleeping accommodations, the conflict is completely unnecessary; the host’s accidental death compels them to spend the night elsewhere (2014-26). Another reason for undertaking violence is entertainment or pleasure, as when the knights assembled for Erec’s wedding decide to celebrate with a tournament (*Erec* 2222–28). Both of the above forms of knightly violence have the potential to reward the victors with honor, a third reason for seeking out combat unrelated to any prior hostilities or enmity requiring some form of conflict resolution. Lands and horses often changed hands as the spoils of battle, but honor was the all-important commodity. When Erec sets out after Iders, it is to win back his honor after the dwarf whipped him (95-159). Likewise, it is honor that motivates him to leave Karnant with Enite to seek *âventiure* (2966-3112). The pursuit of honor motivates Erec from the beginning to the final battle of the narrative, when he decides to fight Mabonagrín (8520-75). Honor is also Iwein’s

motivation in seeking the adventure of the fountain (893-948). Even in those battles undertaken purely in the pursuit of honor, where no form of villainy complicates the issue, opponents are limited to fellow knights pursuing the same goal. Clearly, there is more to violence than conflict resolution.

Rarely do knights in the Arthurian legends exhibit a preference for a peaceful means of conflict resolution. One occasion when a knight would obviously prefer a peaceful resolution occurs when King Ascalon confronts Kalogrenant in the adventure of the fountain; Kalogrenant tries in vain to convince Ascalon, who is obviously stronger than he, of his innocence (*Iwein* 731-36). Another occasion when a non-combative resolution is preferred is when Gawan and Gramoflanz plan to fight (*Parzival* 696.25-30). In this case, the situation is complicated by burgeoning familial ties; Gramoflanz is in love with Gawan's sister, Itonje (606.21-607.16), who would consider herself betrayed no matter who emerge as the victor of a violent conflict (710.10-30). Gawan states that he would gladly give up the fight (708.17-20). His disinclination for battle in this instance is understandable; he would cause his sister great grief if he killed her suitor. A third instance is when Wigalois attempts to reason with the Red Knight, Count Hoyer, rather than challenge him immediately for his *gewalt* toward the Persian lady (2756-57, 2788-832). Two reasons discouraged the pursuit of peaceful resolutions to conflict, both of which are related. One reason was the pursuit of honor; knights could not gain honor by seeking alternatives to violent conflict. The unwritten code of knightly virtues demanded that knights seek honor through violence: "swer sich an êren wil erholn, / der muoz benamen kumber doln /

und underwîlen arbeit” (*Wigalois* 2880-82).²⁸⁹ The second reason for choosing violence was the ready assumption of cowardice on the part of the individual who suggested peaceful negotiation over battle. There are times when the observers of a violent conflict would prefer a peaceful resolution, as when Iwein and Gawain prepare to engage in battle over an inheritance (*Iwein* 6908-23). The knights involved in this circumstance show no inclination to avoid battle until night separates them and they recognize each other (7351-487). After this, their friendship would forbid any further battle between them. Although it was possible to gain honor by (accidentally) defeating a friend or relative, as Parzival does when he forces Gawan to his knees, the victor only views it as regrettable (*Parzival* 689.25-690. 8, 694.26-30).²⁹⁰ In such instances, knights would rather avoid conflict altogether or find a peaceful resolution.

The Arthurian romances glorify violence, a fact that would have appealed to the Germanic warriors of the past (Jaeger 195). Yet, the courtly culture that conceived the Arthurian romances turned the violent warrior into a hero who would defend the innocent and avenge the victimized. In this regard, we cannot accuse the knightly use of violence of being ‘medieval’ in the sense that it belongs to an era of past history, even fictional history, that we have rejected. The (subjectively) justified use of violence is a concept the modern world can understand; as the

²⁸⁹ ‘Whoever wants to increase his honor must suffer true affliction and adversity in battle.’ There are various definitions of the word *arbeit* in Middle High German, but the context refers to the many battles that Count Hoyer has won.

²⁹⁰ It is possible that the *prîs* ‘praise’ Parzival receives in this passage does not refer to his somewhat questionable victory over Gawan. The balance of honor confirms Parzival’s gain, however, because Gawan states that he has lost honor in this battle (689.9-16).

comparison with Batman illustrates, we still look for the willingness to fight injustice, even by violent means, in our fictional heroes today.

Each work in this study has been considered separately with respect to manifestations of violence and conflict resolution. There are several facets of violence and conflict resolution that are pertinent to all four works, such as violence against women. Consequently, each chapter contains a section dealing with that motif. Sexual violence, by contrast, is more pertinent to Wolfram's narrative than to any of the other works because of the nature of Anfortas's unhealable wound and the castration of Clinschor (479.8-12, 656.25-657.25). It is hoped that this method of analysis will form a basis for further study of the concepts of violence and conflict resolution in Middle High German Arthurian legends, and other literary forms.

The current study has considered violence and conflict resolution, but, for the medieval knight, battle was the preferred method of conflict resolution. It was the avenue through which knights attained their life-long pursuit of (hopefully) ever increasing honor; battle brought honor to the victor and dishonor to the vanquished (Jones 20). Because of the nature of honor as something given and received, deeds of valor had to be witnessed. This is why Iwein chases King Ascalon to his castle in Hartmann's second romance (1059-74); if he had defeated the king without witnesses in the wilderness, it would have brought him no honor. Honor is a *sine qua non* for knightly existence and honor is intimately bound up with the knight's prowess as a fighter, even killer. Small wonder, then, that knights were more often inclined to seek conflict resolution with the blade than with the word.

There remains much research to be done in the areas of violence and conflict resolution in Middle High German literature. One area yet to be studied is how the Middle High German Arthurian romances compare in this respect with those of the Old French author Chrétien de

Troyes. Are the concepts of violence and conflict resolution handled differently by German and French authors? In which direction do cultural influences flow? For example, is there evidence of the Germanic values of honor and vengeance in the Old French works? Two other genres of Middle High German narrative also deserve further study with respect to the role and significance of violence and conflict resolution: the heroic epic, such as the *Nibelungenlied* and *Kudrun*, and the *Spielmannsepen* ‘minstrel epics,’ such as *Herzog Ernst* and *König Rother*. How do examples of conflict resolution from the heroic tradition or from the *Spielmannsepen* differ from those of Arthurian romances? Are there commonalities that would tell us more about medieval attitudes toward violence and the willingness to pursue alternative means of conflict resolution? These questions offer scholars a wide field for further analysis.

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